

Those who flee from the noise of the fear in this age are apt to fall into the pit; he that comes up out of the midst of the pit is sometimes taken in the snare.

In verses 19 and 20 we have a picture of great convulsions of the earth at the end of the age. The condition of individual terror and fear described in verses 16b-18 passes over into great convulsions and turmoil in verses 19 and 20, until the earth reels to and fro like a drunkard, "and it shall fall, and not rise again."

In verse 21 we see divine interposition to bring an end to the forces of wickedness that are controlling the world in this age. Two types of adversaries are mentioned: "the kings of the earth upon the earth" and "the host of the high ones that are on high." These latter are the real enemies, "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6:12). Satan, "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), is the supreme enemy of God's people in these days. He will not always continue to have his present power. God is going to intervene.

Verse 22 tells what God will do after He seizes the evil leaders. "They shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison." The verse ends strangely: "After many days shall they be visited." The word translated "visited" is very different from our modern English idea of visiting or making a call. The only trace of it surviving in modern English is found in one sense of the word "visitation." It means "to interpose with power in such a way as to make a great change in one's condition." It may be a change for the better or for the worse. Thus, God visits His wrath upon the ungodly. He visits His people, when He rescues them from their distress (cf., for instance, Ruth 1:6). The word is frequently used in the Old Testament.

Our present verse states that the spiritual forces of darkness are to be shut up in the prison, and then that after many days they are to be visited. It is a strange prediction. Why does Isaiah not simply say that Satan is going to be punished, and stop there? Why is it important to mention that there is to be a time of "many days" when he will be shut up in the prison before his visitation? If it is merely a matter of Satan's being closed in the prison for a time before