

work of redemption is finished, but the working out of the redemption in purifying the earth and its people is still future. Even though originally addressed to the prophet's contemporaries, the rebukes have significance for the professing church, and we lose something we need when we fail to study them carefully and to see to how great an extent they may be applied to ourselves. The blessings, similarly, are for Israel. Some of them, indeed, are intended for the physical descendants of the ancient Israelites. All of them have some reference, and some have a very specific reference, to the remnant of grace, which may be exemplified in our own day by the church invisible, contained in the professing church but to some extent to be contrasted with it.

Examination of the prophetic books as a whole shows many occasions when the prophet begins with pointing out the sins of his contemporaries, sharply rebukes them for it, urges them to turn away from it, points to the calamities that God has determined to bring upon the nation as a result of its sin, and then looks far beyond the predicted misery to reassure the righteous that God is still interested in them and will eventually bring to pass great undeserved blessings that are part of His marvelous plan. The immediate purpose of most of the very distant predictions, whether of Christ's first coming, or of His second, is to bring encouragement and comfort to the godly.

Let us now turn our attention to Isaiah 24. Since it has rightly been declared that a text without a context is only a pretext, it is proper that we should note that this particular chapter is sharply separated from what precedes and from what follows. Often a chapter of the Bible is not correctly interpreted unless taken in close relation to the preceding or following chapters. In fact there are many instances where a vital division of a book comes in the middle of a chapter, so that each section of the chapter has a far greater relation to the preceding or following material than to the rest of the chapter. In chapter 24