

Assyria?" Here the word "land" is used five times, and it is exactly the same Hebrew word which the KJV renders as "earth" so frequently in our present chapter (Cf. also Genesis 42:30; Deuteronomy 1:8, etc.) Whether the word means a section of the world, such as a country, or whether it means the whole earth, must always be determined in the light of context, and cannot be decided by the usage of the one word.

Delitzsch interprets the passage as describing great convulsions which affect the entire world at the end of the age. In contrast with his usual sound methods of procedure, he seems to base this almost entirely on the claim that the word designates the entire globe. Alexander, on the other hand, thinks that we have here a description of the desolation of the land of Judah, whether at the hands of the Assyrians, of the Babylonians, or of the later conquerors.

There are a number of reasons why it seems best to interpret Isaiah 24:1-13a as referring only to the land of Israel. The special mention of one city, in verses 10 and 12, hardly fits a world-wide description. The various statements in the passage seem more naturally to describe a country made desolate by war than a world shaken by final convulsions. Many of the phrases used in the section are actually applied to Israel elsewhere, e. g. 2 Kings 21:13 (turneth it upside down), Hosea 4:9; Isaiah 33:9; etc. The passage does not seem to lay its stress on the actual upheaval, but rather on the ensuing stagnation and decline. This is natural enough in a portrayal of the results of foreign invasions of Israel, but hardly appropriate to a picture of world-wide catastrophes at the very end of this age.

A further reason for thinking that Israel is primarily in view is derived from the references to different classes of people in verse 2 and to "laws," "ordinance," and "the everlasting covenant" in verse 5, which are more appropriate to a discussion of God's dealings with His own people than to a description of His treatment of the world in general. While it is true that all have sinned, and that all deserve punishment for their sins, sections of the Bible which declare God's wrath against foreign nations usually speak of their cruelty and of their attacks against God's people as special grounds for punishment. There is no hint of such accusations in this passage.