

this is not the case. The chapter is easily seen to be a definite unit by itself, separated from the discussion of Tyre in chapter 23 and from the prayer in chapter 25.

Looking at chapter 24 another fact soon becomes apparent. There is a sharp difference of thought at about the middle of the chapter. In the first twelve verses all is gloom and misery. It is a picture of judgment and desolation. The second half of the chapter, while containing a number of verses that picture desolation or calamity, contains a still larger number that describe future blessing to the godly. Under these circumstances our first duty is to determine the exact relevance of the first half of the chapter. Is it a prediction looking far into the future, or is it a passage dealing directly with the prophet's own time? The analogy of the greater part of the prophetic writings would suggest the latter interpretation. Although occasionally a prophetic message may begin in the distant future, it is far more common for the prophet to start with a picture of what is near. In view of this usual analogy the most natural suggestion would be that the first half of the chapter is describing the punishment that God will bring upon the sin of the prophet's contemporaries, and that the latter half looks beyond this judgment to some aspect of God's future plan as a means of encouragement to the godly.

One consideration seems at first sight to militate strongly against this interpretation. Some of these verses create an impression of worldwide calamity-- an impression that is derived mainly from the frequent use of the word "earth," which suggests a prediction about the whole world. Yet this interpretation may perhaps be a false one. The word "earth" is a translation of the Hebrew. While this word is often used to describe the entire globe it is still more frequently used to denote a particular area, such as the land of Egypt, the land of Israel, or the land of Assyria. If the word were to be translated "land" in this