

Though verse 21 is very clearly speaking of God's intervention to destroy the power of the forces of evil, it is quite premature to translate the word as "punish" here; "intervene" would come nearer, even if not exactly giving the full meaning. There is usually the meaning not only of taking an action, but of taking with power an action that will make a great difference to the fate of those with whom it deals. In this case, the result is shown at the beginning of the next verse, which says that those whom God thus "visits" will be gathered together and shut up in prison.

Verse 21 speaks of "the host of the high ones on high and the kings of the earth upon the earth." Here God has given Isaiah a glimpse of the truth revealed in Ephesians 6:12 that we wrestle not merely against earthly opponents, but also "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." God will intervene not only against the human forces of wickedness but also against the supernatural forces that are directing and inciting them.

Verse 22 is a very interesting verse. These evil forces are to be gathered together and shut up in a prison. Then we read, "after many days shall they be visited." The word is again . "Visit" here has nothing of the common present meaning of paying someone a visit, or making a call. It does not mean that someone will visit these people in prison. The Hebrew word is never used in that sense. It means that after many days a great change will be made in their condition. The nature of the change is not stated. If one were speaking of an earthly court, one might well say that criminals will be put into jail, and then, after a long time, when finally the slow processes of justice reach the point of taking care of their case, they will receive their punishment. To make such a criticism of divine justice would hardly be in keeping with the attitude of Isaiah. Yet this interpretation would be easily derived from the translation of the RSV, which seems