

# ISAIAH

## Chapter 27

### *Deliverance of Israel*

In that day, the LORD will punish with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea. <sup>2</sup> In that day— “Sing about a fruitful vineyard: <sup>3</sup> I, the LORD, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. <sup>4</sup> I am not angry. If only there were briars and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire. <sup>5</sup> Or else let them come to me for refuge; let them make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me.” <sup>6</sup> In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit. <sup>7</sup> Has the LORD struck her as he struck down those who struck her? Has she been killed as those were killed who killed her? <sup>8</sup> By warfare and exile you contend with her— with his fierce blast he drives her out, as on a day the east wind blows. <sup>9</sup> By this, then, will Jacob’s guilt be atoned for, and this will be the full fruitage of the removal of his sin: When he makes all the altar stones to be like chalk stones crushed to pieces, no Asherah poles or incense altars will be left standing. <sup>10</sup> The fortified city stands desolate, an abandoned settlement, forsaken like the desert; there the calves graze, there they lie down; they strip its branches bare. <sup>11</sup> When its twigs are dry, they are broken off and women come and make fires with them. For this is a people without understanding; so their Maker has no compassion on them, and their Creator shows them no favor. <sup>12</sup> In that day the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, will be gathered up one by one. <sup>13</sup> And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

**27:1–2, 12–13** *In that day.* See 10:20, 27 and note; see also 12:1, 4; 24:21; 25:9; 26:1. (CSB)

**27:1†** The climactic word of judgment in that day. (CSB)

HIS FIERCE AND POWERFUL SWORD – That is, with a harsh sword. For the Roman rule was harsh and was quick to use the sword. This sword is great and grand, that is, powerful, strong, and made of iron. It is invincible, because it brought all into submission. With this sword, I say, the Lord will punish. (Luther)

This is God’s power. Scripture also calls God’s Word a sword (Eph. 6:17) (TLSB)

God's sword of judgment has three characteristics. First, it is "fierce"; that is, it is hard, heavy, and firm; it will not be broken. It will not fail to accomplish its purpose. Second, it is "great"; that is, it is mighty and cannot be opposed. Third, the sword of judgment is "powerful," strong, and violent because the great and powerful arm of the Lord wields it against His enemies. So Isaiah tells his readers that the Lord's judgment upon His enemies will be severe, impossible to oppose, and violent. The message is clear and consistent with everything else Isaiah wrote about God's judgment upon all sinful rebellious, and unbelieving people. (PBC)

*Leviathan ... monster.* † A symbol of wicked nations, such as Egypt (see 30:7 and note; 51:9; Eze 29:3; 32:2). (CSB)

Several ancient Near Eastern mythologies contain a story about a god killing a dragon from the sea, which represented chaos and disorder. The OT sometimes picks up this imagery to describe the Lord's might (cf Ps 104:26). This imagery may describe Satan, the prince of the demons. Everything will be made subject to Christ and then, in turn, to God the Father (1Co 15:24–28). The Lord controls, restrains, and ultimately defeats evil (1Jn 3:8). Luther: "It seems to me the prophet is speaking about the kings of Syria, of the Egyptians and others, and about the kings and princes of the Jews at the time of Christ, all of whose kingdoms were to be made subject to the Roman rule. When Christ's kingdom and the Gospel were already imminent, the Roman rule came first and established peace throughout the world, so that the Gospel could be preached by the apostles everywhere on safe roads.... For the Roman rule was harsh and was quick to use the sword" (AE 16:211). (TLSB)

Here he mentions two serpents, signifying the kings ruling over the world, as Scripture frequently calls kings serpents and as the prophet calls the king of the Egyptians the dragon of the Nile who lives beside the Nile. (Luther)

*gliding ... coiling serpent.* Cf. Job 3:8; 41:1; Ps 74:14. Such descriptions of Leviathan occur outside the Bible as well. (CSB)

That is, the straight one, a serpent that swims with a straight body, which symbolizes the kings that rule uprightly and in an orderly way. (Luther)

That is, curved, which swims coiled and in a circle. This represents the kings whose rule is restless and disorderly. (Luther)

He calls the serpent *Leviathan* allegorically. Leviathan properly speaking is a sea monster. These two serpents (kings of Syria, of the Egyptians and others), the straight one and the twisted one, fought with each other until the Romans swallowed them both. Therefore he allegorically calls the serpent Leviathan and refers to all the kings who sport about on the sea and the princes who directly and indirectly make a game of ruling the people. *Leviathan* is an addition, that is, some insatiable thing. Thus the ambitious princes cannot be satisfied with

kingdoms but are eager to add kingdom to kingdom, and so also an insatiable demon is called Leviathan. (Luther)

**27:2–6** A second vineyard song (see 5:1–7 and notes). (CSB)

**27:2–3** Israel is the vineyard, and the Lord is the vine dresser (cf Jn 15:1–8). In ch 5, however, the Lord is intent on destroying His vineyard because it had failed to produce good fruit. (TLSB)

**27:2** *vineyard*. Israel. (CSB)

In Hebrew: a vineyard of **רַמְּהָר**. **רַמְּהָר** denotes quality, the best wine, such as red wine is with us. Therefore it is called pure wine, which is the best, and it denotes the godly church, which will be a vineyard of pure wine, not bearing wild vines, but a vineyard of pure wine. The church will bear good wine, not like the synagogue. This song follows. (Luther)

**27:3** I THE LORD WATCH OVER IT – This is the glow of the church, that it has no teacher and bishop but Christ, who alone rules over His church through His Spirit and His Gospel, as Paul writes of it in an excellent manner in Eph. 4:15. Here the Lord says: “I am its guardian, bishop, keeper, and teacher, not as the old Law was administered by Moses and through the service of angels. (Luther)

WATER IT CONTINUALLY – That is, My church. I myself will quickly revive it, exhausted as it is by all deceptions and errors. I will be with it; I will not forsake it. I will give it to drink. “Come to Me, all you who thirst” (John 7:37). Such promises Christ makes to His church, and we should promptly believe them.

GUARD IT DAY AND NIGHT – In this way the text coheres, as if to say, “Lest anyone harm it,” that is, “lest any leaf fall off suddenly, I will water it thus in heat and drought, because a dry vineyard is altogether ruined.” In this way He expresses the greatness and power of His promises to the church, that He will care for it in this way. *Night and day*, in time of peace and in time of trouble He will preserve it, so that not one leaf wither and fall off. Night and day Christ is concerned for our welfare, that is, at all times He can easily turn day into night and night into day and adapt all things to the benefit of His church. (Luther)

**27:4–5** † A picture of Israel’s response to the Lord—not “briers and thorns” (v. 4) like the other nations, but not fully at peace with the Lord either (see 29:13). (CSB)

**27:4** I AM NOT ANGRY – This is strengthening for the fearful church. He says: “I cannot be enraged. I appear to be enraged, but it is not true.” We feel it as wrath, but it is not wrath, just as parents are not wrathful when they chastise their children. Let this be a gloss regarding all the tribulations of Christians, which

should be inscribed for the godly in all persecutions: *I have no wrath*. Note this. (Luther)

Peace follows His judgment of Israel (ch 26). The wicked may escape the fires of divine wrath if they “make peace with” God (v 5). (TLSB)

*briers and thorns*. See 5:6 and note. (CSB)

This is said in opposition to our evil and carnal thoughts and the designs of the devil, which turn one so kind into one enraged and harsh as a thorn and brier. For Satan and the flesh act thus that when the kindly Lord thrusts us into dangers, they argue impatiently: “The Lord has forgotten me, He is angry with me, He has thorns, etc.”

Literally, “Would that were given Me, that I had before Me, thorns and briers in battle!” the reference being to His warfare against the wicked of the world. (Kretzmann)

I WOULD MARCH AGAINST THEM – It is as if He were saying: “My Christian is indeed in difficulties, but I will go to war and battle for him and defend him. Therefore he must not believe that I have thorns and briers, but much more that I am a waterer and defender and that ‘a bruised reed I will not break, and a dimly burning wick I will not quench’ ” (Is. 42:3). Therefore with these words He here reproves those who make Him out to be hard as a thorn, and He comforts His own, so that they might take refuge with Him in all tribulations, knowing that there is no wrath in Him. (Luther)

SET THEM ALL ON FIRE – These are still the words of God, who is chiding our notion which conceives of God as wrathful and as a severe and incendiary destroyer. When He chastens us out of His goodness, then our reason argues that God is drawing us into the lowest hell. The godly and the church have this temptation in tribulations, a temptation which He reproves. They should not harbor such thoughts but rather believe that in these divine trials they are protected and never destroyed, because He Himself is their guardian and bishop. Thus the afflicted Paul prayed the Lord thrice, but God did not remove the affliction, saying: “My grace is sufficient for you, etc.” (2 Cor. 12:9). Let this teach the weak and hint brothers to be consoled, because they may be persuaded by Satan that God is angry when they experience tribulations. (Luther)

**27:5** LET THEM COME TO ME FOR REFUGE – Here follows the second part to console us in time of temptation, when we despair that Christ is not able to preserve us. Therefore he says: “Who will lay hold of My protection? ”Who is so strong that he can prevent Me from saving My church and from smiting the adversaries?” (Luther)

Without God's grace and protection, we are not a pleasant vineyard but are thorns and briars to be destroyed. In Him, we are grafted to Jesus, the true vine (John 15:1-6). (TLSB)

PEACE WITH ME – That is, “Let no one make Me out to be thorny and severe when it comes to consoling. Let no one make Me out to be weak when it comes to defending. I will make peace, nevertheless, and I will be a king of peace, whether you have thought Me to be hard or powerless.” It is as if He were saying: “Let no one despair of Me, but let him have peace in Me, though in the world he may have distress. I want peace.” In this way He brings the words of comfort to an end. (Luther)

Let him make his peace with God, the only alternative by which the wicked may escape the threatened punishment, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me. To take refuge with God and make peace with Him is the only advisable course for all those who have ever opposed Him. The prophet now adds to this song, as an explanation for the sake of his reader. (Kretzmann)

**27:6** Israel will once more be the people God desires, filling the whole world as Jews and Gentiles together in God's vineyard. (TLSB)

*take root.* See 11:1, 10 and notes. (CSB)

The days will come when I will defend My vineyard, so that Jacob may take root, that is, produce sap.” (Luther)

*bud and blossom.* See 4:2 and note. The Messianic age is in view. (CSB)

That is, “the church, thoroughly harassed by the cross, will put forth shoots, germinate, and grow verdant through the apostles and the godly. (Luther)

*fill all the world.* Contrast 26:18. (CSB)

It is as if He were saying: “Far from being hard, since I could not be wrathful, I will rather be a king of peace in such a way that My vineyard will germinate and spread itself abroad.” (Luther)

**27:7–11** What the Lord is going to do with Israel in the judgments that are about to overtake her in Isaiah's day. (CSB)

**27:7** *He.* The Lord. (TLSB)

*struck her.* Cf. 10:24–26. (CSB)

The nations God used as a chastening rod against Israel were punished as well, to a greater degree than Israel was. (TLSB)

“I will not smite My church the way someone is smitten by enemies. I will not allow it to be thus smitten, but I chasten and chastise it. I do not smite with the blow of a smiter, I do not kill in the manner of killing, but in the manner of making alive.” “The Lord brings down to Sheol and raises up” (1 Sam. 2:6). Let every Christian know, therefore, that his tribulation is not evil but good, imposed by a good God. It is not as reason and Satan argue: “You are poor, cast off, and thoroughly afflicted. God is hard and unmerciful, He has forgotten you, He is your enemy and adversary.” Such afflicted consciences can be abundantly consoled by this chapter. For from it we can draw plentiful arguments for a letter of comfort: (1) Trust, child. (2) I, the Lord, am your keeper. (3) I will instantly water day and night. (4) I have no wrath. (5) Who thinks that I am thorn and brier and exceedingly hard? (6) I am so powerful. No one will hold back My strength. (7) I will have such a peace that My vineyard will take root and flourish. I smite and chasten you not with the smiting of the smiter, but in the manner of a keeper and a father. (Luther)

**27:8** *exile*.† Such as the Babylonian captivity. (CSB)

Jerome seems to have doubled the first word. This describes the spirit and manner of judging, the spirit in which the Lord chastises His church, namely, that it be a chastening with moderation, which He may take away in His own time, not as the enemies do. (Luther)

The ESV has “measure by measure” instead of warfare and exile, and this note in TLSB, “Hebrew may also be rendered “by a frightening sound,” the kind that flushes animals from their hiding place. (TLSB)

*east wind*. A hot wind from the desert (see Jer 4:11; Eze 19:12). (CSB)

The east wind dries up and burns, especially at Easter time, and destroys the blossoms. So God grants that His church is chastised with a burning wind and very great persecution, yet He chastises it by measure.

Literally, “He breathes with His rough breath on the day of the east wind”; that is, the Lord, at the time of the captivity, sent His breath with great force to purify the country. Not the destruction of Israel, but its salvation, was intended. (Kretzmann)

God’s breath once gave life (Gen 2:7). Now, His powerful breath defeats His enemies. Is 11:4; Rev 1:16. (TLSB)

**27:9** *atoned for*.† Israel (Jacob), chastened in the exile, will repent and receive “the removal of his sin.” (CSB)

It will be chastised in this so that the remission of sins may be exercised, as Paul says to the Hebrews concerning the heavenly Father (Heb. 12:6 f.). With supreme benefit He chastises His own with much greater love than earthly fathers. Thus you see that the Lord's chastening is distinguished by many features, namely, that it is paternal, that it is applied in moderation, and that it is for the purpose of implementing the remission of sins, because it leads a man to call upon God. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you" (Ps. 50:15). He speaks thus so that we may more easily forgive others. We groan and sigh to God always, and thus spirit, faith, and love grow. Thus the forgiveness of sins follows and is put into effect. Thus you see how noble and necessary God's chastening is. For through the Word the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed, through faith it is received, and through the cross it is put into effect.

The Lord did not deal with His people as they deserved, but in mercy (Romans 5:20). (TLSB)

WILL BE FULL FRUITAGE – This is the effect of the cross, that every sin and the whole body of sin may be destroyed by believing in forgiveness, lest we fall either into presumption or into despair, but it keeps us in the middle way, that we acknowledge our sin and call upon God. (Luther)

The people will want no other gods and so will destroy all items related to foreign gods. (TLSB)

*altar ... Asherah poles ... incense altars.* See 17:8 and note. (CSB)

Broken into powder like chalk. Used to worship Baal. (TLSB)

*crushed to pieces.* See Ex 34:13. (CSB)

In the very cleansing from sin he says that all altars and stones will be crushed and destroyed, so that there will be and remain no idolatry whatever, but be destroyed to such an extent that even the stones of the altars will utterly be reduced to ashes, that no idolatry will be practiced in groves and with images. An idol, however, is both the source of all sins and our presumption, and is clearly against God's First Commandment. The cross and the chastening of God casts this idol down that we may abide in God's First Commandment, that we may fear and dread and love God. If we have remained in this commandment, they easily perform the works of the remaining commandments in the original righteousness. Thus those who in their presumption trust in their own power, wisdom, and wealth, these choose their own things as divine worship and spurn God, as we see in tyrants, heretics, and hypocrites. These rely on their own power, wisdom, and wealth contrary to God's First Commandment. This is what it means to commit idolatry. The saints and godly, however, are kept by the cross and chastening in the fear of God and are estranged from trust in themselves. This is the fruit of the chastisement of God, that it teaches us not to flee but to approach

God and, what is greatest, that it kills that supreme idolatry, trust in oneself. This killing is much greater than the outward mortification of the flesh, of lust, and of other outward things that cannot be compared with this killing. But the cross casts out this idol so that we do not rely on ourselves. Even so all hypocrites on the basis of a little good (as it seems) have such confidence in themselves that it knows no bounds, as happened to me once upon a time. How much pride came over me when I correctly celebrated one Mass!<sup>6</sup>Shame on you! So it happens also to all other hypocrites with their glittering works. They defend their idolatry with their works. This idolatry God's unique chastisement casts out. (Luther)

“So that the places of Ashtoreth and the images of the sun shall not rise again.” Israel is shown the condition under which it will be acceptable to God. By dashing to pieces the stones of their idolatrous altars and destroying both the idols and their pedestals, the people of the land will give evidence of the fruit of the expiation that has been rendered and of the forgiveness that has been received. All this is stated in emphatic contrast to the fate which overcame the city of wickedness, the representative of hostility against God. (Kretzmann)

**27:10** *fortified city*. Jerusalem. (CSB)

The once-great Babylon, now conquered. (TLSB)

This again refers to Jerusalem, which did not take up the cross but relied on itself as a fortified city relies on itself. (Luther)

*desolate ... forsaken*. Cf. 6:11–12. (CSB)

That is, they did not want to be comforted but to rely on themselves, and therefore it will remain deserted. So Jerusalem relied on its worship, its temple, its Law, its fortifications. This was entirely taken away from the people, therefore the city is desolate and forsaken. Our papists have the same experience. *Habitation*, that is, splendid palaces and the splendid and constant building of the temple. *Forsaken*, fallen into ruin. This will befall our tyrants. (Luther)

*calves graze*. Cf. 5:5; 7:25. (CSB)

Only animals inhabit the ruined city. (TLSB)

Jerusalem will be reduced to such a state of destruction and devastation that the cattle will graze there. (Luther)

STRIP ITS BRANCHES – Even the branches and shoots will be stripped off by the cattle. In this roundabout way the prophet shows that pride and presumption will be destroyed from the ground up, like a city where grass and bramble bushes grow. (Luther)



**27:11** Those who reject God and His grace face the consequences they deserve. They will not be spared like those who trust Him. (TLSB)

**TWIGS ARE DRY ... BROKEN OFF ... WOMEN MAKE FIRES WITH THEM** – This is what he wants to say: Thus it will happen to the area that all fruits of the earth will dry up and the crop will be stubble that is good for nothing but that poor women gather that crop in the fields to make fire. This denotes the empty attempt and endeavor of the Jews, just like that of the farmer. A harvest for the stubble of the furrows. This describes the punishment of the ungodly and the presumptuous. Therefore the godly need chastisement lest they fall into presumption. For the presumptuous ungodly are moved by nothing, neither threats nor promises. They regard their punishment as martyrdom, they ascribe their well-being to their own works and never truly give God credit. All of these people who rely on their own holiness find out that with all their efforts they are always laboring in vain, gathering a harvest without fruit, as it will be with the farmers. The prophet gives the following reason. (Luther)

**PEOPLE WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING** – That is, it does not care and take heed. This is a nation without purpose. The prophet follows Moses, who threatens a people that does not understand and give heed to God, people who spurn everything they hear and care nothing for the words of Christ and the prophets and apostles. And because of this contempt of theirs they are punished in this way that their harvest is withered. (Luther)

**SHOWS THEM NO FAVOR** – He will show them no favor. Because they spurn the proffered grace God will subsequently have no compassion on them. (Luther)

**27:12–13**† The redemption promised for “that day.” (CSB)

**27:12** *will thresh.*† Judgment on the nations into which Israel has been dispersed (see note on 21:10). The threshing will unite the exiled Israelites. (CSB)

Because the people spewed out the proffered grace, they have not been spared. (Luther)

*Wadi of Egypt.* Probably the Wadi el-Arish, the southern border of the promised land (the Euphrates is the northern border). See Ge 15:18 and note; 1Ki 4:21; 8:65. (CSB)

The Nile. (TLSB)

*thresh.* Metaphor of harvesting and bringing the good grain into the barn describes how the Lord will gather His people to Himself on the Last Day. Cf Mt 13:24–30; Rv 14:15–16. (TLSB)

WILL BE GATHERED UP ONE BY ONE – Thus he declares that by a gathering some, namely, the gathered remnant of Israel, those who come to their senses, will be converted to God, as Paul points out to the Romans (Rom. 11:5). These the Lord will by his Word shake out and winnow from the unfaithful. For the preaching of the Gospel is the Lord's winnowing-fork. (Luther)

**27:13** *great trumpet*. † Used especially to summon troops (see 1Sa 13:3). The blowing of the trumpet suggests also the events of the last day, when spiritual Israel (the elect) will be gathered together from all nations and will enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 24:31). (CSB)

The sound that accompanies the Lord's return (Zec 9:14; 1Co 15:52; 1Th 4:16). (TLSB)

He does not say that the Gospel will be trumpeted forth and the people will be gathered one by one in some places, but that even the lost and the outcasts in the land of Syria and Egypt and Assyria are to be gathered, so that the Gospel is to be preached not only between these two rivers, but it is to be preached beyond and outside this area for the assembly of many brothers to call upon the Lord *on the holy mountain at Jerusalem*, that is, the church. (Luther)

*Assyria ... Egypt*. See 11:11–12 and notes. (CSB)

*holy mountain*. Mount Zion (see 2:2–4 and note; see also 24:23; 25:6–7, 10 and note). (CSB)

The Lord dwells on Zion in Jerusalem (Is. 2:1-5; 8:18; 11:9). (TLSB)

**Ch 27** Following judgment, the Lord will keep and protect His people as a pleasant vineyard. Though the Lord delights to produce the fruit of good works in His people, our sinful nature continually aims to hinder the harvest of this fruit. Jesus, the true vine, has made us His living branches (Jn 15:5). Through faith in Him, our guilt has been atoned for, and our sin has been removed. • Lord Jesus, we receive from You life and strength. Grant that the fruit of good works that You produce in our lives might bless the whole world. Amen. (TLSB)