

*Intriguing, informative, and inspiring
for readers today!*

NEW COLLEGEVILLE BIBLE COMMENTARY

With text from the New American Bible, Revised Edition



See all available
titles in both series
at www.litpress.org,
or use your
smartphone to scan
this QR code.

Comprehensive and understandable, these books bring the relevance of the Old and New Testaments to Bible study participants, teachers, students, preachers, and all readers of the Bible.

Each volume is: Paperback, 6 x 9

OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

This series, scheduled for completion in 2013, features twenty-five titles. Pre-order to receive all future NCBC Old Testament titles as they are released—with free shipping!* Call 1-800-858-5450.



NEW TESTAMENT SERIES

This complete series features twelve titles.

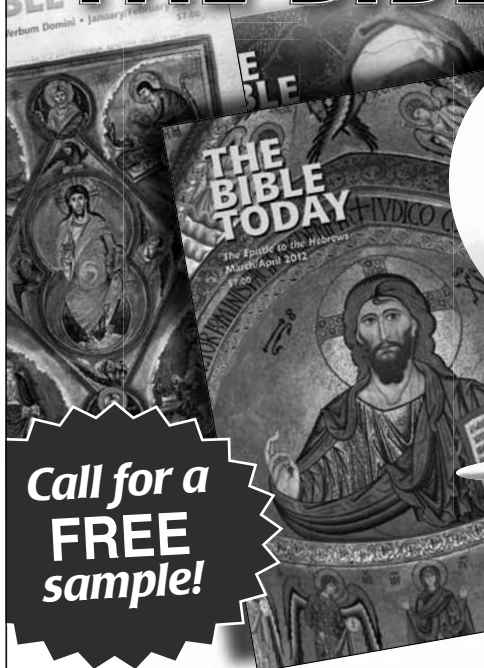


*Free shipping offer available in the United States only.

LITURGICAL PRESS www.litpress.org | 1-800-858-5450



THE BIBLE TODAY



Call for a
FREE
sample!

THE BIBLE TODAY (6 issues)

Experience Scripture as it comes alive through illustrated articles and commentary from the best and most recent biblical scholarship. Every issue of *The Bible Today* focuses on a different theme or book of the Bible. Journey through the pages and picture yourself experiencing the events of the period, visiting significant places, and meeting the people of the Bible.

Subscribe and start your journey today!

Subscription: \$37.00 one year
\$67.00 two years

Foreign*: \$54.00 one year
\$101.00 two years

Single copy: \$7.50 (postage additional)

*Canadian customers add current GST. Payment must be in U.S. funds.

LITURGICAL PRESS

Phone: 1-800-858-5450

Fax: 1-800-445-5899

Email: sales@litpress.org

Order online: www.litpress.org/journals

"The Bible Today offers sound, well-written scholarship in a clear, easy-to-read style. It's truly a pearl at a very LOW price. Thumbs up all the way!"

Thomas J. Gumbleton
Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus, Detroit

In every issue of *The Bible Today*:

- In the *Biblical Update* biblical scholars share stimulating insights on a specific book or theme of the Bible.
- *The Biblical Update Study Guide* provides reflection questions and resources for further study about the featured theme.
- *Seers' Corner* offers beautifully illustrated text to help you experience important events, people, and places.
- *The Biblical Landscape* invites you to explore cultural, archaeological, and geographical aspects of the biblical world.
- *What's Biblical about . . . ?* interprets the biblical basis of Catholic practices, issues, and customs.
- *The Bible in Review* offers information about recent books on biblical topics.

VOLUME 13

OLD TESTAMENT

THE NEW COLLEGEVILLE
BIBLE COMMENTARY

ISAIAH

Leslie J. Hoppe, O.F.M.

SERIES EDITOR

Daniel Durken, O.S.B.



LITURGICAL PRESS

Collegeville, Minnesota

www.litpress.org

Nihil Obstat: Reverend Robert Harren, *Censor deputatus.*

Imprimatur: ✠ Most Reverend John F. Kinney, J.C.D., D.D., Bishop of Saint Cloud,
Minnesota, May 11, 2012.

Design by Ann Blattner.

Cover illustration: detail by *Vision of Isaiah* by Donald Jackson. © 2007 *The Saint John's Bible*, Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota, USA. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Photos: pages 10, 41, Wikimedia Commons; page 22, Photos.com; page 93, Thinkstock/iStockphotos; page 144, David Manahan, OSB; page 167, Thinkstock/Ingram Publishing.

Maps created by Robert Cronan of Lucidity Information Design, LLC.

Scripture texts used in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. All Rights Reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

© 2012 by Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, microfilm, microfiche, mechanical recording, photocopying, translation, or by any other means, known or yet unknown, for any purpose except brief quotations in reviews, without the previous written permission of Liturgical Press, Saint John's Abbey, P.O. Box 7500, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-7500. Printed in the United States of America.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hoppe, Leslie J.

Isaiah / Leslie J. Hoppe.

p. cm. — (New Collegeville Bible commentary. Old Testament ; v. 13)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-8146-2847-8

1. Bible. O.T. Isaiah—Commentaries. I. Title.

BS1515.53.H67 2012

224'.1077—dc23

2012014491

CONTENTS

Abbreviations 4

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Introduction 5

Text and Commentary 11

Jerusalem's Future (1:1–12:6) 11

Jerusalem and the Nations (13:1–27:13) 44

Jerusalem's Judgment and Salvation (28:1–39:8) 73

Jerusalem's Liberation (40:1–55:13) 103

The New Jerusalem (56:1–66:24) 148

Review Aids and Discussion Topics 174

Index of Citations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 178

Maps 179

ABBREVIATIONS

Books of the Bible

Acts—Acts of the Apostles

Amos—Amos

Bar—Baruch

1 Chr—1 Chronicles

2 Chr—2 Chronicles

Col—Colossians

1 Cor—1 Corinthians

2 Cor—2 Corinthians

Dan—Daniel

Deut—Deuteronomy

Eccl (or Qoh)—Ecclesiastes

Eph—Ephesians

Esth—Esther

Exod—Exodus

Ezek—Ezekiel

Ezra—Ezra

Gal—Galatians

Gen—Genesis

Hab—Habakkuk

Hag—Haggai

Heb—Hebrews

Hos—Hosea

Isa—Isaiah

Jas—James

Jdt—Judith

Jer—Jeremiah

Job—Job

Joel—Joel

John—John

1 John—1 John

2 John—2 John

3 John—3 John

Jonah—Jonah

Josh—Joshua

Jude—Jude

Judg—Judges

1 Kgs—1 Kings

2 Kgs—2 Kings

Lam—Lamentations

Lev—Leviticus

Luke—Luke

1 Macc—1 Maccabees

2 Macc—2 Maccabees

Mal—Malachi

Mark—Mark

Matt—Matthew

Mic—Micah

Nah—Nahum

Neh—Nehemiah

Num—Numbers

Obad—Obadiah

1 Pet—1 Peter

2 Pet—2 Peter

Phil—Philippians

Phlm—Philemon

Prov—Proverbs

Ps(s)—Psalms

Rev—Revelation

Rom—Romans

Ruth—Ruth

1 Sam—1 Samuel

2 Sam—2 Samuel

Sir—Sirach

Song—Song of Songs

1 Thess—1 Thessalonians

2 Thess—2 Thessalonians

1 Tim—1 Timothy

2 Tim—2 Timothy

Titus—Titus

Tob—Tobit

Wis—Wisdom

Zech—Zechariah

Zeph—Zephaniah

The Book of Isaiah

By any measure the book of Isaiah is among the world's greatest works of religious literature. It probes the mystery of a people's life with God. It is unrelenting in its insistence that the foundation of that life is God's commitment to Jerusalem—God's unwillingness to make judgment on the city's infidelity the last word that its people would hear. The book makes use of a variety of literary techniques—both prose and poetry—to move people to see that Jerusalem did have a future with God. The book's principal characters—the Holy One of Israel, the virgin daughter Zion, and the Servant of the Lord—engage the reader in a drama of great emotion and intensity. Other personalities appear as the book's reflection on Israel's life with God oscillates between judgment and salvation. These include the prophet Isaiah and his two strangely named sons; King Ahaz and his son Hezekiah; Cyrus the Persian; the owner of an unproductive vineyard; the Assyrian army; the nations; the poor; and Immanuel. Justice for the poor is a motif that continually surfaces throughout the book, leading the reader to conclude that Israel's relationship with its God is indirect—that it is a by-product of the creation and maintenance of a just society.

Those who read this book from beginning to end will experience a range of emotions that testify to the book's complexity. They will sympathize with the prophet's friend who expected to find a good harvest of grapes in his vineyard (Isa 5). They will be in awe with the prophet as he experiences the majesty of God (Isa 6). They will puzzle at the obtuseness of Ahaz (Isa 7). They will reel at the intense hatred of the oracles against the nations (Isa 13–27). They will be relieved as they hear of Jerusalem's liberation (Isa 40). They will be shocked at the suffering of the Servant of the Lord (52:13–53:12). They will be happy for mother Zion embraced by her husband and surrounded by her children again (Isa 62, 66). And they will be disappointed by the book's ending (66:24). The last verse is so depressing that when the final verses of Isaiah are read in the synagogue, by custom the reader repeats verse 23, with its more upbeat tone after reading verse 24 so that the book does not end on a negative note.

The book of Isaiah continues to have a profound influence on its readers—especially those who belong to two of the religious traditions that developed from the religion of ancient Israel: Judaism and Christianity. The book of Isaiah is often read in the synagogue as the *Haftarah*, the reading that is meant to parallel and illuminate the reading from the torah. Also, the significance of Jerusalem in the book of Isaiah has helped shaped Judaism's attitude toward this city. Especially significant is the vision of justice and peace with which the city will be blessed (see 2:2-4; 11:6-9).

The Christian confession of Jesus as the Messiah has been shaped significantly by the book of Isaiah. Among the more significant references to Isaiah in the New Testament is Matthew's citation of the Immanuel prophecy (Isa 7:14; Matt 2:23), Luke's use of elements from the fourth Servant Song to explain the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death (e.g., Isa 53:7-9; Luke 33:27; Acts 8:32-33), and the idea of the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation (Isa 65:18; Rev 21:2). The church's early theologians referred to the book of Isaiah as "the fifth gospel," because they discerned the significance of this book for the New Testament, which cites Isaiah more often than any book of the Hebrew Bible except the book of Psalms. Isaiah continues to exercise its influence in the church. Passages from Isaiah are read frequently in both the Sunday and weekday lectionaries. The Second Vatican Council cited Isaiah 2:4 and 32:17 in its Constitution on the Church in the Modern World when speaking on social justice and peace (*Gaudium et spes*, 70). Finally, the book's vision for the future has provided liberation theologians with a biblical foundation for their advocacy on behalf of the poor and oppressed.

Modern scholarly interpretation of Isaiah has been shaped by the recognition that the book is a composite work that reflects three different periods of Jerusalem's history. Chapters 1–23 and 28–39 contain material relating to the ministry of the eighth-century prophet, Isaiah, son of Amoz (1:1-2). He condemned the social, political, and economic system of the kingdom of Judah because it created a two-tiered society made up of the very rich and very poor. The rich acquired and maintained their position in Judahite society by taking advantage of the poor. What was even worse was that the temple and its liturgy were used to assure the oppressors that God would continue to protect Judah despite its manifest failure to maintain a community of justice. The prophet believed that the aggressively militaristic Assyrian Empire was God's instrument of judgment on the kingdom of Judah. Chapters 36–39 are taken for the most part from 2 Kings 18:13–20:19, which describes the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 40–55 are the product of an anonymous prophet whose ministry took place about 125 years after that of Isaiah, son of Amoz. The message

of these chapters is that there is a future for Jerusalem beyond the disaster that occurred when Nabuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, captured Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, ended the Judahite monarchy and national state, and led off many leading citizens into exile. The rise of Cyrus, the Persian, convinced the anonymous prophet of the exile that Judah's time of judgment was over and that Cyrus was God's chosen instrument to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple (Isa 45). The prophet's exquisite poems helped the people of Judah to make sense of the disaster they experienced and to see that there was a future beyond judgment.

Isaiah 56–66 are a collection of poems that reflected the disillusionment of some when the hopes engendered by Isaiah 40–55 did not materialize. While the temple had been rebuilt, the national state was not restored, the economy was in shambles, and the conflict between the wealthy and the poor resurfaced. Despite the disappointment, the poems of chapters 56–66 expect a full and glorious restoration for Judah (Isa 60).

The final component of Isaiah is found in chapters 24–27. These chapters look forward to a day of judgment when God will finally defeat the powers of evil, vindicate the just, and punish evildoers. The day of judgment will end with all God's people, scattered about the world, returning to worship God in Jerusalem (Isa 27:13).

The circumstances under which the book of Isaiah took the form it now has are not entirely clear. Three fairly complete copies of the book of Isaiah were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls so the book in its present form existed prior to the second century B.C. when the community that produced the scrolls settled near the Dead Sea. The latest components of the book (chs. 24–27) probably date from no later than the fourth century. More precision than this is not possible at present. The book of Isaiah, then, took the form it now has sometime between the fourth and the second centuries B.C., though the earliest components of the book come from the eighth century B.C. What is clear is the book's purpose: to give the people of Judah and Jerusalem hope for the future and the will to re-embrace their ancestral religious traditions. Of course, there were other similar attempts. For example, the Deuteronomic tradition tries to persuade Judah that its future is tied up with careful observance of the norms of traditional Israelite morality as articulated in the book of Deuteronomy. The Chronicler asserts that Judah's future depends upon the legitimacy of its temple rituals as marked by their continuity with preexilic liturgical traditions. The book of Isaiah sees Jerusalem's future as God's "creative redemption." Jerusalem's response to this new act of God is to create and maintain a society based on justice and equity.

While this commentary assumes the composite character of the book, it will approach the work as a whole with a literary and theological integrity of its own. The divisions of the book adopted here are not those reflecting the history of its composition but its literary shape. The book falls into five parts of approximately the same length, which usually begin with an oracle of judgment on pride and arrogance and end with a word of salvation. Also, each of these sections is addressed to Jerusalem. These five sections are chapters 1–12: Jerusalem’s Future; chapters 13–27: Jerusalem and the Nations; chapters 28–39: Judgment and Salvation for Jerusalem; chapters 40–55: Jerusalem’s Liberation; and chapters 56–66: The New Jerusalem.

There are two principal motifs that are the literary and theological linchpins of the book of Isaiah. The first flows from the distinctive title the book of Isaiah gives for God: “the Holy One of Israel.” This unique Isaianic way of speaking about Jerusalem’s God was formulated to expand the people’s notion of deity. The Lord was unlike any other god and did not act as Jerusalem expected God to act. The holiness of God, then, was not a “moral” quality. It was God’s otherness and singularity. It was manifest in the way God acted toward Jerusalem and the nations. In the first three sections of the book (1–12; 13–27; 28–39), God demands that Jerusalem create and maintain a society based on justice. The consequence for failing to do this will be severe judgment including the loss of the state, dynasty, temple, and land. In the fourth section of the book (40–55), there are several instances when “Holy One” is followed by the term “redeemer” (41:14; 43:14; 47:4; 48:17). In the last section, the nations will recognize the holiness of Israel’s God because of Jerusalem’s commitment to justice (57:15; 60:9, 14).

The second principal motif of the book is Jerusalem/Zion. The portrait that the prophet paints of the city contrasts sharply with that of the “Holy One of Israel.” While the Lord demands justice for the poor, Jerusalem and its leaders crush them. While God’s holiness has been made known to Israel throughout its history, Jerusalem seeks its security in alliances with other nations and through the worship of other gods. When God declares that Jerusalem has paid for its sins, the people are hesitant to believe. Despite this, God never stops loving Jerusalem and its people. God is determined to provide Jerusalem with a glorious future. The interaction between the Holy One of Israel and Jerusalem is the engine that drives Isaiah.

To appreciate the book’s achievement, it is best to read the text straight through first without the commentary. This will allow the reader to get a sense of the book as a whole. Such a sustained reading will evoke from the reader a variety of responses. Reading the commentary then will help the reader probe more deeply into parts of the text that are particularly

intriguing, inspiring, or puzzling. The most creative interaction with the text will result from the reader's recognition that the book is an expression of faith—faith in the Holy One of Israel and in the future of Jerusalem. The book is confident that judgment, though deserved by the city, is never God's last word to Jerusalem. The Jewish reader still looks to the final redemption of Jerusalem, while the book's Christian reader looks for the coming of the new and heavenly Jerusalem. The faith of both has been shaped decisively by the book of Isaiah.



The Book of Isaiah

I. Isaiah 1–39

A. Indictment of Israel and Judah

1¹The vision which Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

JERUSALEM'S FUTURE

Isaiah 1:1–12:6

The first section of the book of Isaiah begins with an indictment of Jerusalem's infidelity (1:2-9) and ends with a prayer of thanksgiving for its restoration in the future (12:1-6). Between these two poles, Isaiah alternates between harsh and explicit descriptions of the judgment that awaits Jerusalem for its role in creating an unjust society, and lyrical and touching images of the future beyond judgment that God has for the city and its people. The genius of the prophet was not only his ability to appreciate the realities of the political and military crises in Jerusalem's immediate future but especially his ability to see beyond these to a glorious future for Zion. Still, Isaiah was no Pollyanna as his words make clear. He was certain that Jerusalem was to undergo a severe crisis that included political impotence and military defeat. Even more devastating would be the loss of and exile from the land that God promised to ancient Israel's ancestors. But beyond this judgment on Jerusalem was the promise of a new city ruled by a good king who led a people committed to justice.

I:1 The prophet's name

The book identifies itself as the "vision of Isaiah." It is a vision—the prophet's dream—of what he imagined Jerusalem's future to be. The prophet's name clarifies that vision. The name "Isaiah" means "the Lord saves." The naming of four Judahite kings asserts that what follows was first proclaimed in the eighth century B.C. when Jerusalem faced severe political, economic, and military crises.

- ◀ **Accusation and Appeal.** ²Hear,
O heavens, and listen, O earth,
for the LORD speaks:
Sons have I raised and reared,
but they have rebelled against
me!
³An ox knows its owner,
and an ass, its master's manger;
But Israel does not know,
my people has not understood.
⁴Ah! Sinful nation, people laden
with wickedness,
evil offspring, corrupt children!
They have forsaken the LORD,
spurned the Holy One of Israel,
apostatized,
⁵Why would you yet be struck,
that you continue to rebel?
- The whole head is sick,
the whole heart faint.
⁶From the sole of the foot to the head ▶
there is no sound spot in it;
Just bruise and welt and oozing
wound,
not drained, or bandaged,
or eased with salve.
⁷Your country is waste,
your cities burnt with fire;
Your land—before your eyes
strangers devour it,
a waste, like the devastation of
Sodom.
⁸And daughter Zion is left
like a hut in a vineyard,
Like a shed in a melon patch,
like a city blockaded.

1:2-9 God's judgment

The prophet's words begin with a poignant cry of betrayal. That the prophet identifies God as the parent betrayed and Israel as God's guilty children implies that judgment will not be God's last word to Israel. Like the love of parents for their children, God's love for Israel does not fail because of Israel's failures. The second comparison, likening Israel with beasts of burden, suggests that Israel acted out of ignorance, not appreciating the nature of its relationship with God. This also suggests some mitigation of Israel's guilt. Still, this will not prevent Israel from experiencing God's judgment for its infidelity. What the prophet cannot understand is the reason Israel has not learned from experience. Its infidelity continued until its cities were destroyed, its land desolate, and Jerusalem abandoned. Still, God did not allow Israel to destroy itself, but kept a few survivors alive. These survivors have accepted their situation as the Lord's doing, and they recognize the miracle that God worked in keeping them alive.

In verse 9, the prophet introduces what will be a significant theme in the book: the remnant. The survival of the "small remnant" prevented Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah from sharing the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Gen 19:24-25). Paul quotes verse 9 in the course of his impassioned discourse on God's continuing love for the Jewish people (Rom 9:27-29).

▶ This symbol indicates a cross reference number in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. See page 178 for number citations.

⁹If the LORD of hosts had not
left us a small remnant,
We would have become as Sodom,
would have resembled
Gomorrah.

¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD,
princes of Sodom!
Listen to the instruction of our God,
people of Gomorrah!

¹¹What do I care for the multitude
of your sacrifices?
says the LORD.

I have had enough of whole-burnt
rams
and fat of fatlings;
In the blood of calves, lambs, and
goats
I find no pleasure.

¹²When you come to appear before
me,
who asks these things of you?

¹³Trample my courts no more!
To bring offerings is useless;
incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and sabbath, calling
assemblies—
festive convocations with
wickedness—
these I cannot bear.

¹⁴Your new moons and festivals I
detest;
they weigh me down, I tire of
the load.

¹⁵When you spread out your hands,
I will close my eyes to you;
Though you pray the more,
I will not listen.

Your hands are full of blood!
¹⁶Wash yourselves clean!
Put away your misdeeds from
before my eyes;

cease doing evil;
¹⁷learn to do good.
Make justice your aim: redress the
wronged,
hear the orphan's plea, defend
the widow.

¹⁸Come now, let us set things right,
says the LORD:
Though your sins be like scarlet,
they may become white as snow;
Though they be red like crimson,
they may become white as wool.

¹⁹If you are willing, and obey,
you shall eat the good things of
the land;

²⁰But if you refuse and resist,
you shall be eaten by the sword:
for the mouth of the LORD has
spoken!

The Purification of Jerusalem. ²¹How
she has become a prostitute,
the faithful city, so upright!
Justice used to lodge within her,
but now, murderers.

1:10-20 Israel's worship

Taking on the persona of God, the prophet picks up on the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah in verse 9 to introduce a critique of Israel's liturgy that has few parallels in comprehensiveness and intensity. God rejects Israel's religious festivals, sacrifices, and acts of personal piety because Israel has not maintained a just society. Without justice, Israel's worship of the Lord is an empty shell. The book of Isaiah ends with another stinging critique of ritual activity (66:1-4). The book, then, is framed by bitter and comprehensive criticisms of ritual because the prophet believed Israel's communal worship facilitated its selective obedience. Israel believed that

²²Your silver is turned to dross,
your wine is mixed with water.

²³Your princes are rebels
and comrades of thieves;
Each one of them loves a bribe
and looks for gifts.

The fatherless they do not defend,
the widow's plea does not reach
them.

◀ ²⁴Now, therefore, says the Lord,
the LORD of hosts, the Mighty
One of Israel:

Ah! I will take vengeance on my
foes
and fully repay my enemies!

²⁵I will turn my hand against you,
and refine your dross in the
furnace,
removing all your alloy.

²⁶I will restore your judges as at first,
and your counselors as in the
beginning;

After that you shall be called
city of justice, faithful city.

God must be pleased with it because of its liturgy even though its social, political, and economic life was a mockery of justice. Still, God's judgment is not final because God asks Israel to consider what it has done. Israel has to choose between life and death. Obedience is not a matter of knowledge. It is a matter of will. If Israel chooses to live in obedience, then red can become white. Sin can be countered by repentance.

To put the apocalyptic vision recorded in the book of Revelation into words, John studied the book of Isaiah. In describing the devastation of Jerusalem at the end of the age, John alludes to verse 10 and the application of the name Sodom to Jerusalem (Rev 11:8). As a book of prophecy, Isaiah assumes that the people of Judah are in control of their future: the choices *they* make will create their future. The prophet's task is to help the people appreciate the consequences of their choices. Because they have created a society based on injustice and oppression, that society will collapse. The book also affirms that judgment will not be the last word that God will address to Judah. God will restore Jerusalem, giving the people another opportunity to create a just society in which all will enjoy God's peace.

The book of Revelation is an example of an apocalyptic worldview that does not envision the triumph of divine justice in *this* world. Apocalyptic looks forward to a new world to be created by the power of God. The climax of the book of Revelation occurs in chapter 21 with its vision of a "*new* heaven and a *new* earth" (Rev 21:1; emphasis added). But like the book of Isaiah, Revelation identifies Jerusalem as the focal point of the new earth (Rev 21:9-27).

1:21-26 Jerusalem's future

At one time, Jerusalem's social and economic system was just. What once was, however, is no more, and the city faces divine judgment. Its political

<p>²⁷Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and her repentant ones by righteousness.</p> <p>²⁸Rebels and sinners together shall be crushed, those who desert the LORD shall be consumed.</p> <p>Judgment on the Sacred Groves. ²⁹You shall be ashamed of the terebinths which you desired,</p>	<p>and blush on account of the gardens which you chose.</p> <p>³⁰You shall become like a terebinth whose leaves wither, like a garden that has no water.</p> <p>³¹The strong tree shall turn to tinder, and the one who tends it shall become a spark; Both of them shall burn together, and there shall be none to quench them.</p>
--	--

leadership is venal (1:26). The city's leaders should have been protecting the economically vulnerable, but they have used their position to exploit the poor to enrich themselves and thereby have become God's enemies. However, the goal of God's judgment against Jerusalem's elite is not mere vengeance, but the elimination of the city's corrupt political system. With new leadership, Jerusalem can once again be a just and faithful city. Still, the prophet is clear that Zion's current leadership provoked the divine judgment that was coming on Jerusalem. But one day God will provide the city with leaders who have a measure of integrity. The prophet insists that Jerusalem's standing before God is not a consequence of its unique status as the dwelling place of God on earth. Jerusalem's salvation lies in the doing of justice. The city's fate then will be a consequence of its people's commitment to maintaining a just and equitable economic system that protects the most vulnerable people. The future of Jerusalem is in the hands of its people and leaders.

1:29-31 False worship

These verses are likely veiled references to the worship of the goddess Asherah, whose rituals may have involved trees in some way (see Jer 17:2). Asherah was the wife of El, the supreme deity of the Ugaritic pantheon. An inscription found on the Sinai Peninsula suggests that some worshippers of the Lord honored Asherah as the Lord's consort. The prophet objects to worship related to Asherah explicitly in 17:8 and 27:9, and the third part of the book (40–55) is filled with parodies of idol worship. Such worship provided ideological support for an unjust social system based on an elite who controlled the economic lives of the poor. The Lord, however, is a God who takes the side of the poor against those who exploit them.