

The Road to Jesus: The Gospel According to Isaiah
Isaiah 2:1-22
September 9, 2015

INTRODUCTION:

What we know so far... Isaiah is preaching to God's people during a time when they have recently experienced material prosperity but now they are engaged in war or potential war - northern tribes of Israel have allied themselves with Syria (Damascus) against Assyria (Syro-Ephraimite War, 734-32 B. C.). Assyria is going to destroy Israel (Samaria) and come against Jerusalem. It's not going to be pretty.

The *reason* why is because of sin. Jerusalem has revolted against her Father, against her husband. She is sinful, weighed down with iniquity, evildoers, and corrupt (1:4). Forgiveness will be possible, will be made available (1:18) but Judah as to "consent and obey" (1:19).

Idol worship is their fundamental problem. They do not know God (1:3; that is, they do not have a relationship with Him) because they are worshiping under the terebinth (oaks) false gods (1:28-31).

This brings us to God's promise of future blessings in chapter two and the title for our section (chapters 2-5): "God's Call to Live in Light of the Future." Yes, God is going to bring salvation so how is Jerusalem supposed to live in light of that fact? This is not unlike the message of the New Testament for Christians: We do not know when Christ is going to come but we know He is. How then should we live (2 Peter 3:14)?

THE COMING BLESSING - 2:1-4:

Remember, we are operating under the promise of the coming of the forgiveness of sins (1:18) because Jerusalem does not know God nor understand His ways (1:3). This is not an *intellectual* ignorance. It is a *willful* ignorance. When you refuse to read and study God's law, you are ignorant but you are not innocent. So, God needs to take care of their *ignorance* and He can then take care of their sin problem.

Here in 2:1-4, we have God's promise that He will establish the "mountain of the house of the Lord." Please note the parallel for these phrases: "house of the Lord" (vs 2) and "house of the God of Jacob" (vs 3) and "house of Jacob" (vs 6). These are all parallel with the house or dynasty of King David, promised to him in 1 Chronicles 17:11-14 (and 2 Samuel 7).

This "mountain" (and Daniel 2:44 shows us that we're talking about God's governed nation; in fact, we might suggest that Daniel's prophecy in chapter 2 is actually picking up on Isaiah's imagery here from chapter 2) will be the chief of the mountains, better, more respected, more important than all other mountains, including Mount Sinai on which was given the Law of Moses. But the law that will be given in *Jerusalem* will be better, given by the Son of David, King Jesus. This might help us understand the contrast between Mount Sinai and Jerusalem in Galatians 4:26 where Paul says that we are children of Jerusalem. Why? Because that's where the Law of the Spirit of Life was first proclaimed.

So, back to Isaiah, he pictures "all the nations" will *stream* to this mountain. Isaiah is very much a *universal* prophet - he sees salvation being extended to every nation, not just Judah or Israel. In fact, this idea of "streaming" shows the extent of this movement of the Gentiles into Jerusalem. Not only that, but verse 3 shows that these Gentiles will be evangelistic, inviting others to come join them.

Why do the Gentiles want to come to the mountain of the house of the Lord, the house of Jacob? Observe verse 3: “*That He may teach us.*” What was the problem of Jerusalem? They did not *know* nor *understand*. Now, they will. God may teach everyone concerning His ways. Then, when you know His *ways*, you can *walk in His paths*.

The “law will go forth from Zion (a term used for Jerusalem) and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” In contrast with Mount Sinai and the Law of Moses that was given to the Jews, this law would be given in Jerusalem and it will be for all the nations.

It is there that God will judge the nations - through this law that will go forth from Jerusalem - and it is through that law that peace will come to the earth and will reign in the affairs of men (vs 4). Every nation that submits to the Prince of Peace (9:6) will have peace among themselves and between themselves.

The United Nations building in NYC has a stone engraving outside that bears Isaiah’s description here from verse 4. Of course, the UN has done very little to bring about peace. The only real reason why we have not had another World War is that the USA has patrolled the seas with her navy and the skies with her air force and maintained a strong army and marine corps. Now, we have had and still have wars and bloodshed because the UN nor the USA can bring about lasting peace. Only the Prince of Peace can do that but He will *not* do that except as men humbly submit to His rule. “Until persons and nations have come to God to learn his ways and walk in them, peace is an illusion” (Oswalt, 118).

The expression “in the latter days” seems to pick up on Genesis 49:1, 10 and moves that prophecy forward. This idea of “obedience of the peoples” is found here, in Isaiah 2, and in Micah 4:1. Another point might be made... The “house of the God of Jacob” is probably a reference to the *temple* (see also Isaiah 66:20). The “mountain of the house of the Lord” also pictures the temple sitting in Jerusalem. What we have here, then, is a portrait of a new temple, a spiritual temple that was going to be established in Jerusalem to which would flow the nations in order to learn the ways of the God of heaven. Jesus, of course, is the temple of God (John 2:19-22) and His body, the church, is His temple by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

As you already know or might have guessed, this prophecy of this blessing has already been fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:17ff but he begins that quotation by quoting the first few words of Isaiah 2 (in LXX, only occurrence): “In the last days.” The “word of God” or “word of the Lord” is found *twenty times* in Acts, with its roots here in Isaiah 2. And, at key points in the book of Acts as the church spreads and souls are saved, Luke highlights the power of the “word of God:” 6:7; 12:24; 19:20.

What this passage also indicates, as the “nations” are streaming to *Jerusalem* is that we have Gentiles becoming *spiritual Israelites* (see Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 6:16). I brought to your attention the phrases “house of the Lord” in verse 2, “house of the God of Jacob” in verse 3, and “house of Jacob” in verse 6. This latter term is found 9 times in Isaiah, 22 times in the Bible. Write down in your margin Luke 1:33, 69 which show us that Jesus would reign over the “house of Jacob” which is an equivalent term to the “house of David”, which is, of course, the church of Christ.

So, it was on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit guided Peter and the other apostles to begin preaching and teaching the Law of Christ that the reign and rule of King

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, began. Thus, we are operating under the fulfillment of this prophecy today.

THE CALL TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S WAYS - 2:5-21:

Well, whether Isaiah knew it or not, it would be 700 years before that prophecy would be fulfilled. You and I do not yet know when Jesus will come again. Perhaps it will be 700 more years from now or it might be 7,000 years from now. Be that as it may, we have an obligation to live under the light that we have now. That is Isaiah's message to his people...

"Light" is used 29 times in Isaiah. It refers to the light of knowledge that comes from the God of heaven but again, we have a Messianic reference to *light* in 9:1-2 (fulfilled in Matthew 4:16). Verse 5 is grammatically similar to verse 3. Just as the Gentiles will come to Jerusalem to learn, so Isaiah calls on his own people, the Jews, to walk in the light that they have.

So in verses 6-11, God mentions the reasons why He has abandoned His people, the house of Jacob. They are guilty of: ungodly influences from the "east" (a reference to pagan nations), soothsayers from Philistine, alliances with pagan nations, too much trust in their economy, too much trust in their military, idol worship (19 times, "idol"), abusing the poor, and overall pride (or "proud" 18 times) and arrogance ("lofty" - 9 times). "The fundamental point is that foreign thinking and behavior was influencing the worldview of Hebrew people" (Smith, 136).

When God's judgment comes - whether it is in the action of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, or even the Roman Empire - He alone will be exalted and the proud will be abased. "Trusting in possessions, a social position, political power, or human accomplishments has never impressed God. He is looking for humble people who will boldly devote their lives to exalting the Lord alone (2:11, 17)" (Smith, 125-6).

That day of judgment of God is pictured in verses 12ff. The "day of the Lord" usually includes three ideas (Beyer, 51):

1. Judgment of unbelievers.
2. Cleansing of God's people.
3. Salvation of God's people.

A day of reckoning, a day of judgment is coming - against the proud and lofty. In the ensuing verses, Isaiah lists various aspects of the land in which the Jews might put their trust: cedars, oaks, mountains, high towers (of defense), fortified walls, ships of Tarshish (commerce), beautiful crafts. It will all come crashing down under the mighty hand of God.

Again, verse 17 repeats verse 11. The pride of man will be humbled and the loftiness of man will be abased. Also, verse 18, idols will vanish completely.

During the coming day of God's judgment, men will hide. This verse or its imagery is picked up by John in the book of Revelation and applied to men then who refuse to repent at God's coming judgment, which would include the Jews (6:15-17). Notice the phrase at the end of verse 19, found also in verse 20: "When He arises to make the earth tremble." What I want to point out is that this expression is *apocalyptic* but it is *not referring to the destruction of the world*. It is referring to the destruction of the *Jews' world, their way of doing things*. "In causing the earth to tremble the Lord does not shake the physical earth, but rather the wicked inhabitants of earth, who will feel the effect of His judgment" (Young, 131).

Haggai comes along and predicts a similar trembling, a similar shaking: “For thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land’” (2:6). The Hebrew writer quotes that passage in reference to Christ establish His church, a kingdom which will not be shaken (Heb. 12:25-29). Again, apocalyptic imagery that does not refer to the second coming of Christ.

Back to Isaiah, in verse 20, the prophet pictures Judah, under the wrath of God’s coming judgment, throwing their idols of silver and gold to the moles and the bats. They are going to get rid of those idols. Indeed, after 70 years of exile in Babylon, the Jews no longer have any trouble with idolatry!

JUDGMENT AGAINST LEADERS - 2:22:

In light of all these threats by the God of heaven, Isaiah warns his people to *stop trusting human leaders!* Why? Because his “breath of life is in his nostrils.” He is weak. He does not know the future. “Idolatry is a result, not a cause. It is the exaltation of man that results in idolatry. The tendency of human beings to make ourselves the center of all things and to explain all things in terms of ourselves is the problem” (Oswalt, 128).

In fact, chapter 3 elaborates on what God plans to do with the leaders of Jerusalem...

“Every generation has the opportunity to bow humbly before the glorious revelation of God just as the prophet Isaiah did (6:1-8) or they can arrogantly refuse to interpret reality as God sees it, thereby closing their eyes and ears so that they do not humbly respond by repenting of sin, glorifying God, or serving as his faithful messengers (6:1-10)” (Smith, 124).

KEY POINTS:

The new, spiritual temple is going to be established in Jerusalem to which Gentiles will join and from which the law of God will be proclaimed.

In this new, spiritual temple peace will abound.

Israel needs to repent of pride, abusing the poor, and trusting in man, in his gods, his business, or his military.