
Observations from Isaiah

LESSON III : ISRAEL NOW AND LATER (2:1-22)

General chapter outline (from Young's *Isaiah*):

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 - 1. Judah's Sinful Condition (1:1-9)
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 - b. The condition of the nation (1:4-9)
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a. A glorious future for God's people (2:1-4)

<i>This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and</i>	<i>The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be</i>	<i>The thing that Isaiah son of Amoz hath seen concerning Judah and Jerusalem: And it hath come to pass, In the latter end of the days, Established is the mount of Jehovah's house, Above the top of the mounts, And it hath been lifted up above</i>
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all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (NIV)

exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (KJV)

the heights, And flowed unto it have all the nations. And gone have many peoples and said, Come, and we go up unto the mount of Jehovah, Unto the house of the God of Jacob, And He doth teach us of His ways, And we walk in His paths, For from Zion goeth forth a law, And a word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And He hath judged between the nations, And hath given a decision to many peoples, And they have beat their swords to ploughshares, And their spears to pruning-hooks, Nation doth not lift up sword unto nation, Nor do they learn any more — war. (YLT)

TO SEE A WORD — v1 constitutes the title or heading of the second prophecy. Young notes the strange expression: “to see a word”, with the Hebrew lending the emphasis of “the specific word” or “the well-known word”. “The phrase simply refers to a revelation in vision, which was communicated in words.” [Young, *Isaiah*]

ISAIAH AND MICAH — v2-4 forms the text or introduction to the first great section of prophecy, chapters 2-4. The verses themselves are questioned as to its origin, since similar verses are found in Micah 4:1-3 —

Isaiah 2:2-4

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Micah 4:1-3

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Somewhat similar questions might be asked that's frequently asked of Jude and 2 Peter 2: did Isaiah write this and Micah copied; or did Micah write this and Isaiah copied; or did they both copy from another now-lost text? The question is unanswerable and has no bearing on whether the verses should be here or not, but it does tend to give a human face to the doctrine of inspiration. The God who reveals Himself in His word used many means to give us His word. This in no way takes away from the veracity of His word but reminds us that the Holy Spirit used man in a mysterious way to fulfill His will.

ISRAEL'S GLORIOUS FUTURE — Isaiah abruptly throws us into the passage, "*and it came to pass*", as if connecting this with what's gone before, but with what? It might be his abrupt manner was intentional to bring us face-to-face with the fact of Israel's glorious future. The tense in the Hebrew (which Young's Literal Translation tries to emphasize) also makes it evident this is a future vision, with Isaiah stating "this will happen..." then writing in the past (imperfect) tense.

THE LAST DAYS — *The Hebrew word denotes what is hindmost or farthestmost.* It is used in Deut 11:12 to refer to the last part of the year, contrasted with the beginning of the year. The phrase itself simply indicates "*the last part of the days.*" Note "*the*" days, emphasizing (as Young says) the days as a totality or as a whole. "It is, then, the last part of *the* days, the days which were then and there running their course, that forms the period of time in which the events of this prophecy were to be fulfilled. According to the Hebrew method of designating history, human history was called 'the days.' Thus, the Hebrew title of the books of Chronicles is 'words of the days.' *The days are those of our human lives here upon this earth. These days will at one time come to an end, and in their last part, the last part of human history, the prophecy will be fulfilled.*" [Young, *Isaiah*]

A PERMANENT FIXTURE — Isaiah states the mount is "established", expressing the idea of permanent duration and strengthened by the "shall be". This is a certain event, one which will endure.

THE MOUNT OF THE LORD — a direct reference to Mt Moriah on which the temple had been built, actually separate from Ophel or David's city (Zion) but often in scripture the one word Zion embraced both without distinction.

THE "LEAD" MOUNTAIN — At the end times the mount of the Lord's house (not "temple", NIV) will be the leader of all mountains, lifted above the heights of all others.

UNIFIED RELIGION: ALL NATIONS WILL "FLOW" INTO THE MOUNT — Here Isaiah likens the nations to rivers, not difficult to imagine since the three great nations of his day (Egypt, Assyria and Babylon) were situated on great rivers (the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates). What is unusual however is *water flowing uphill*. The emphasis however is in the latter days all nations of the earth will embrace the truth of God and "flow" into Zion to worship. In Isaiah's day Judaism was confined essentially to Israel with the other nations considering it another form of a local deity. The day will come when all the earth will come to the house of the God of Jacob to learn the ways of Jehovah.

UNIFIED WORLD PEACE: GOD WILL JUDGE BETWEEN THE NATIONS — Not only will all embrace the truths of the scripture and religious error gone, but the nations will be at peace with one another, God Himself acting as arbitrator between disputes. Being at true peace with each other, nations will no longer have need for implements of war. They will therefore turn their "*swords into ploughshares, spears into pruning-hooks.*" The *ploughshares* probably denotes a

sharp-edged instrument as a mattock, possibly used to cut furrows for the ploughshare to turn up. The *pruning hooks* are sharp knives used to prune vines.

LITERAL OR SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION? — These verses present us with the matter of how we are to interpret what Isaiah has said: was he speaking literally or spiritually? The answer to that question depends a lot upon whether a person is an *a-millennialist* or a *pre-millennialist*. This has to do with what's called *eschatology* or *the doctrines of the last things: the return of Christ, how one interprets the millennium, heaven, hell, etc.* Because of the many verses within Isaiah which will deal with this situation, it might be wise to spend a few moments laying some ground work. A few general comments to begin:

- **one's interpretation of the millennium should not be a major dividing factor within churches or between churches** — Throughout history there have been excellent men and women of God who have differed on this subject. *This is not therefore a test of spirituality nor orthodoxy.* I have on my shelves and are even using for these studies men who differ on this subject. In our church we have fine men and women who differ concerning this. It should not divide.
- **no single interpretation is without difficulties** — Regardless of one's interpretation of the millennium there are unanswerable questions. *This should humble us before the wisdom of God and mellow our approach to fellow believers. We realize the future is in the hands of the Lord and while He's given us enough for us to know now, we leave the details to Him.* Even with the first Advent, Christ's disciples believed He was the Messiah with all their hearts yet fled when He was taken to be crucified. What is so easy for us to understand in hindsight is often difficult to separate prior to the event happening.
- **"living the Christian life now is more important than what will happen in the future"** — (I quote a good friend of mine) It is easy for especially a new believer to focus on the future while missing truly important things critical to our growth as believers. *A daily communion with Christ is more important than watching for the AntiChrist.*

The general eschatological viewpoints center upon one's interpretation of what will happen at Jesus' second advent. None of these interpretations deny Christ's return. The general differences:

- **POSTMILLENNIALISM** — this position takes its name from "*Christ returns after (post) the millennium*". This position believes the Lord will use the church age to bring in the millennium, then after the world is converted to Christ, Jesus will return. This was a very popular position a century or so ago when western civilization was apparently coming to its "golden age". The 20th century has greatly diminished the numbers of those who hold this view.
- **AMILLENNIALISM** — this position takes its name from "*Christ returns then immediately we enter the eternal state, there not (a = not) being a millennium*". The amillennialists admit the OT teaches a kingdom reign of Christ but takes the NT to interpret the OT promises spiritually. This has many advocates, now and through history, and many arguments may be made in favor of this view. I do not hold this view however due to it spiritualizing so much of the OT.
- **PREMILLENNIALISM** — this position takes its name from *Christ returns before (pre-) the millennium*. This position allows for a more literal view of OT and NT passages. But

even holding to a literal view of the scriptures in itself presents problems because, as the amillenialists argue, even Jesus taught not to be overly literal at times (Mk 8:14-17). Where to draw the line is not always easy and some have gone to extremes in the attempt to be a true “Bible believer”, sometimes to the great embarrassment of the kingdom.

How is this present passage to be interpreted? Young in his excellent commentary states, “In speaking of the future or Messianic age, Isaiah, as a prophet of the Old Testament, uses the thought forms and the figures which were current in that age. It is obvious that the language of the prophet cannot be interpreted in a consistently literal sense. Rather, Isaiah takes the figures which were the property of the Old Testament economy and makes them the vehicles of expression for the truths of salvation and blessing which were the characteristics of the age of grace.” [Young, *Isaiah*] Young therefore takes an amillennial position and while I don’t agree with his conclusions, he has many good things to say concerning this passage. Briefly though this is Young’s interpretation: “*all nations flowing to Jerusalem*” = a reference to the church Jesus founded, which had its beginning at Jerusalem and spread to all nations. “*Learn from Zion the law, the teaching of Jehovah*” = learning the scriptures from the church. “*He will judge between the nations*” = at first Young makes the comment that this refers to a period of peace when Messiah rules; later he takes this peace to be first the spiritual peace brought at salvation between the sinner and his God, which then produces practical results in the differences between men diminishing.

I do not agree with Young (et. al.). Read the passage again: *In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.* I believe it an injustice to state all the preceding merely means “God will no longer confine Himself to Israel but will establish churches throughout the world which will teach the truth of the gospel. To the degree men accept this, they will be at peace with God in the fullest sense and at peace with each other as they embrace His teachings.” I take the passage to mean what it says (I do not state that in a mocking tone nor is it over-simplistic), that in Isaiah’s day Jerusalem was battered and the “world was winning”, but there will come a day when all the earth will look to Zion (Jerusalem) for spiritual truths and there will be a world-wide peace. God (in the Person of the Messiah) will be on the throne in Jerusalem to judge between the nations. Implements of war will no longer be necessary and they will literally not exist.

b. Judah’s present corruption (2:5-11)

<i>Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD. You have abandoned your people, the house of Jacob. They are full of superstitions from the East; they practice divination like the Philistines and clasp hands with pagans. Their</i>	<i>O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD. Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of</i>	<i>O house of Jacob, come, And we walk in the light of Jehovah. For Thou hast left Thy people, the house of Jacob. For they have been filled from the east, And are sorcerers like the Philistines, And with the children of strangers strike hands. And its</i>
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land is full of silver and gold; there is no end to their treasures. Their land is full of horses; there is no end to their chariots. Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made. So man will be brought low and mankind humbled — do not forgive them. Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty! The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. (NIV)

strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: and the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not. Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. (KJV)

land is full of silver and gold, And there is no end to its treasures, And its land is full of horses, And there is no end to its chariots, and its land is full of idols, To the work of its hands it boweth itself, To that which its fingers have made, and the low boweth down, and the high is humbled, And Thou acceptest them not. Enter into a rock, and be hidden in dust, Because of the fear of Jehovah, And because of the honour of His excellency. The haughty eyes of man have been humbled, And bowed down hath been the loftiness of men, And set on high hath Jehovah alone been in that day. (YLT)

WHY WAIT TO BOW THE KNEE? — v5 forms a suitable connection between what precedes and what follows. *What all the earth will one day do, Isaiah encourages his own people to do the same.* “From the wondrous picture of the future, from the contemplation of the blessing that is one day to come, **Isaiah turns to the actual city of Jerusalem and the actual people of Judah in whose midst he lives.** The house of Jacob, those who are descended from Jacob, the inhabitants of eighth-century Jerusalem and Judah, is quite different from the Zion of the future. The Temple stands there in all its Solomonic beauty; the sacrifices are performed, but the nation does not delight in the law of the God. All about is oppression and wickedness. Does not this people, the house of Jacob, know that Zion will one day be the center of salvation? As though echoing the words of the nations, ‘Come, and let us go unto the mount of the LORD,’ Isaiah had so commanded the sinful nation, when he had said, ‘Come, and let us reason together.’ In each instance the imperative is followed by a cohortative, ‘Come, and let us...’. It is as though Isaiah had said, ‘Leave the place where you are, the place of your sin, and come, together let us walk.’ ” [Young, *Isaiah*]

THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD: BEING ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN SIN! — v6 changes abruptly, Isaiah as it were a prayer of agony addressed directly to God. Not that God has totally forsaken His people (cp *the remnant* 1:9; 1 Sam 12:22; Ps 94:14) but that He has left them to their own devices. “Isaiah now proceeds to state the consequences of the Lord forsaking Israel, which consequences at the same time constitute the grounds or reasons for the rejection.” [Young, *Isaiah*] *This reminds us of one of the means by which God punishes sin: by allowing the sinner to continue in his sin!* While we may not like it, the best thing the Lord could ever do for us is to intervene, make us uncomfortable with our sin, convict us of our sin, and eventually give us victory over the sin. But lost mankind would rather continue in his sin and the unsaved heart is grateful for the Lord leaving him alone, unaware that is his condemnation.

ISRAEL'S SINS ARE "FILLED" — One of the emphasizes Isaiah puts in these verses is that Israel is "filled" with her sins (v6 *full of superstition*, v7 *full of silver and gold*, v7 *full of horses*, v8 *full of idols*). According to Young, the Hebrew tense indicates a past action with present continuing conditions.

ISRAEL'S SINS — Isaiah enumerates the sins they have / are committing:

- **superstitions from the East... soothsayers like the Philistines** (v6) — the picture here is of a vessel that is filled with no room to hold anything more. The East has always been regarded as the source for superstitions and soothsayers, brought into Israel via caravans. Those observers of omens are not *from* Philistia but *like* the Philistines. In the latter days Israel will influence the nations; here Israel has been influenced by the world.
- **associations with the pagans** (v6) — literally "to clasp hands with a person", the sense being Israel had formed alliances with those of foreign descent. Not that it is a sin to fraternize with the other nations but the emphasis here is Israel had rejected her own glorious history full of the miracles of God to give preference to the world.
- **silver and gold** (v7) — in Deut 17:17 the king was forbidden to multiply silver and gold to himself for that would incur greed and trust in finances. Wealth also draws the attention of others, a problem we see in chapter 39 when Hezekiah glories in his wealth to the Babylonians. Note it is not the silver and gold in and of themselves; money is not necessarily sinful (it is not "money is the root of all kinds of evil" but "the *love* of money" — 1 Tim 6:10). ***But an overabundance of good things tend to turn hearts away from the Lord, filled with the comforts of the world and forgetting the Giver of these comforts. There is no end to their treasures:*** the sense being no amount is ever enough; they were literally money-mad!
- **horses and chariots** (v7) — again forbidden in Deut 17:16 was the multiplying of horses. The emphasis here is of trusting one's strength militarily rather than relying on the Lord.
- **idols** (v8) — God promised to fill Israel with His glory yet they rejected that in favor of hand-made idols which could not speak nor hear (the acceptance of false religions). There is a play on words in the Hebrew: God in Hebrew is *el* or *elohim*; here the land was filled with *elilim*, meaning nothingness. The word is a disdainful word according to Young, meaning "little gods, godlets"; the basic sense is "worthless, insufficient". ***In the broadest sense any philosophy created by man and then worshiped would fit this description of idolatry: modern psychology, evolution, secular humanism would be some of America's idols. The apostle Paul adds covetousness to this list (Col 3:5).***

ALL OF MANKIND TO BE JUDGED — This is a message to *all*: two Hebrew words are here used for *man*, one a general term and one denoting possibly a man of importance. All will be humbled regardless of their stature in life. The passage again is reminiscent of Micah, chapter 5:10-14. According to Grogan in his commentary, there are many links of terminology and idea including some exact wording.

THE EVANGELIST AGREES — v9 ends in an imperative, a *command* as it were, to God. It is as if Isaiah is recalling Ex 34:7 "*God will by no means clear the guilty*". Isaiah here agrees with the humbling judgement to come as being deserved for their sin, the sense being "*Thou canst not possible pardon them!*"

c. The Day of the Lord (2:12-22)

The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled), for all the cedars of Lebanon, tall and lofty, and all the oaks of Bashan, for all the towering mountains and all the high hills, for every lofty tower and every fortified wall, for every trading ship and every stately vessel. The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols will totally disappear. Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. In that day men will throw away to the rodents and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship. They will flee to caverns in the rocks and to the overhanging crags from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he? (NIV)

For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of? (KJV)

For a day is to Jehovah of Hosts, For every proud and high one, And for every lifted up and low one, And for all cedars of Lebanon, The high and the exalted ones, And for all oaks of Bashan, And for all the high mountains, And for all the exalted heights, And for every high tower, And for every fenced wall, And for all ships of Tarshish, And for all desirable pictures. And bowed down hath been the haughtiness of man, And humbled the loftiness of men, And set on high hath Jehovah alone been in that day. And the idols — they completely pass away. And men have entered into caverns of rocks, And into caves of dust, Because of the fear of Jehovah, And because of the honour of His excellency, In His rising to terrify the earth. In that day doth man cast his idols of silver, And his idols of gold, That they have made for him to worship, To moles, and to bats, To enter into cavities of the rocks, And into clefts of the high places, Because of the fear of Jehovah, And because of the honour of His excellency, In His rising to terrify the earth. Cease for you from man, Whose breath is in his nostrils, For — in what is he esteemed? (YLT)

Isaiah now pronounces specific judgements to a number of objects of which man has placed his confidence. Young paraphrases this portion as follows: *“In that day Yahweh alone will be exalted, for, as a matter of fact, there is a day which belongs alone to Yahweh of hosts. Man has had his day, a day in which he has chosen the idols to be his supports. Now, Yahweh is to have His day, and that day of His will affect all that in the sight of man is high and lifted up.”*

THE DAY OF THE LORD — This phrase is often used in OT prophetic literature in several contexts. The simplest, best definition of what this implies is “the day of the Lord” will be *the time when God has His way!* This is not to imply things are not in the Lord’s control at the present moment; rather the implication is that now, during this present time, the Lord is *allowing* man to mock and disobey, quite often without any immediate evidence of retribution. This is *sinful man’s* day when man can do as he pleases (again, this is not bringing into the picture the sovereignty of God; in the fullest sense, even man’s sins are taken into account within the perfect, secret will of God). There will come a time however when the Lord will act, and it will be *His* day. “Other prophets had already mentioned the day, but it is in Isaiah that the concept obtains a force not found previously. *It is pictured as a storm which sweeps over everything that in the opinion of man was lifted up and exalted.*” [Young, *Isaiah*]

UPON ALL THAT IS LIFTED UP — Man in his sinful hatred of God elevates objects of our pleasing to be worshiped; it is these items which are the object of judgement. Note the destructive nature of sin which not only affects us but the creation as well. “*The Prophet declares that he had his eye on men, when he described the various kinds of loftiness; for God is not displeased with the steep mountains or tall cedars, which He created, but informs us that the whole evil lies in men, who vainly trust to what is high and lofty.*” [Calvin; q.v. Young, *Isaiah*]

THE ITEMS JUDGED — Isaiah enumerates the things which God will judge. In so doing, the list is of course incomplete and the ultimate judgement of God will affect all creation. It should also be noted the items lists were not in and of itself evil but merely things highly regarded by man.

- **cedars of Lebanon** — particularly admired by the Jews (Ps 92:12; 104:16; Ez 31:3), used in the building of both temples (1 Kings 5:6; Ezra 3:7), the trunks were used as ship masts (Ez 27:5), and the evergreen leaves did not fall off in winter. Lebanon is used in the Bible as a symbol of beauty (Jer 22:6; Zech 11:1ff).
- **mighty trees of Bashan** — Bashan is a region south of Damascus, east of the Jordan river, and famous for its oaks (Ez 27:6). “The cedars and oaks were notable specimens of trees, and the point of the verse is that these things, which to men seemed to be high and lifted up, would in the judgement of God become low. Because of man’s sin, even the great and beautiful things of creation were to be destroyed.” [Young, *Isaiah*]
- **towering mountains and high hills** — symbols of the eternal, even these were be subject to the wrath of God.
- **tower and fortified wall** — objects of which man puts his trust as a means of defense. Towers were used to spot enemy movement, and in the days of Isaiah all cities had fort-like walls surrounding its perimeters. A city without walls in the OT is a reference to either a defenseless city or a city dwelling in peace which had no need of defenses. But the strongest of man’s defenses will not stand in the judgement of God.
- **trading ship and stately vessel** — “trading ship” is literally “every ship of Tarshish”. Tarshish was a Phoenician colony in the western Mediterranean known for its seagoing vessels. Such ships were engaged in foreign trade, bringing both the necessities and luxuries of life. The word translated “vessel” may be linked to an Egyptian word meaning “ship”, having the connotation of a pleasure ship.

● **idols** — in v6-8 idols are listed last; here again in the list of items overthrown in judgement, Isaiah lists the idols last; the reason being that idols are the root from whence the other evils flow.

MEN WILL FLEE — Isaiah does not warn men to flee in direct terms; rather he states what men *will* do in the future, the implication being that *if one is wise he will flee to God now!*

THE SURETY OF PERSONAL JUDGEMENT — Put in terms familiar with the Israelites, Isaiah warns that in the day of the Lord, no place will be safe to avoid judgement. Men will one day seek refuge in both the natural caves and the man-made caverns or excavations to run from God.

“REPENTANCE” TOO LATE — In haste men in that day will throw away the idols they had long loved. Note how man had thought them worthy of his affections: they are idols of silver and gold, nothing being too good. But now they cannot dispose of them too quickly. We must note: *how does God respond to their actions? Now that man has “finally come to his senses”, does the Lord stop the judgement and accept man with open arms? No, the scriptures clearly indicate here and in many other places (Prov 1:20-33 for example) that God gives man sufficient time to repent, then He acts in judgement. The time to turn to the Lord is past and now man is to be punished for his decision.* This was also seen in the days of Noah, during which time God gave man 120 years to repent after His declaration of the coming judgement by water. Only Noah and his family entered the ark and even then God waited another 7 days. But then He shut the door and the rains began to fall. Can’t you picture men and women scraping the door of the ark with their hands, banging to get in, pleading, begging to have the door open? Can’t you hear the ones crying out “forgive me” ... “I’m sorry, I was wrong” ... yet God did not open the door. It was too late.

IS IT EVER TOO LATE TO REPENT? — This question obviously arises out of this text. The best answer I’ve ever heard is that of Bridge’s in his commentary on Proverbs: *“true repentance is never too late, but late repentance is seldom true.”* Bridge’s point is the difference between truly repenting of our sins and just being sorry we were caught. *If we from our hearts see the hideousness of our sins and turn from them, we don’t wait until judgement is falling.* If men cling to their sins until the jailkeeper walks them into the cell, saying their sorry then is insincere. If they were truly sorry for what they have done, they would have repented before the cell door closed. When they cry out in tears within the cell, they are actually saying they are sorry they were caught! (obviously this is not to state men may not truly repent after being caught; the point is that often cries of that kind is not evidence of true repentance). Another example is Achan (Joshua 7). After the Lord announced Israel failed to conquer Ai due to sin in the camp, the Lord waited a day to reveal who was the cause. Joshua announced to all the Lord would say tomorrow who was the culprit; why didn’t Achan come forth then? Don’t you think that night was one of little sleep for Achan? Don’t you think he was “sweating it”? “Is Joshua telling the truth? Does he really know who did it or is he bluffing?” The next day after narrowing it down from all of Israel to Achan and his family, Achan finally admitted he did it. Did the Lord turn from His judgement? — no, Achan and his family perished. Why? Didn’t he “confess”? The point here as elsewhere is this: *if his repentance was true, why did he wait until being caught before “repenting”?* God gave him time, and I personally believe if he had admitted it and truly repented the Lord would have forgiven him and spared him and his family. But he held onto his sin until caught... then it was too late.

The LORD Almighty has a day in store
for all the proud and lofty,
for all that is exalted
(and they will be humbled)

— *Isaiah 2:12 NIV*