

ISAIAH 02 – INTRODUCTION

A Tale of Two Days Told in Four Songs^a
(Isaiah 1:27-2:22)

Isaiah 1:27-2:22 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

The Lord is Coming in Justice

²⁷ Zion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent, by righteousness.^b
²⁸ But rebels and sinners shall be destroyed together,
and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed.^c
²⁹ For you shall be ashamed of the oaks^d
in which you delighted;
and you shall blush for the gardens
which you have chosen.^e
³⁰ For you shall be like an oak
whose leaf withers,
and like a garden without water.^f
³¹ And the strong shall become tow^g,
and his work a spark,
and both of them shall burn together,
with none to quench them.^h

Jerusalem the Center of the World

2 The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.ⁱ

² It shall come to pass in the latter daysⁱ
that the mountain of the house of the LORD^k
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
³ and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.^l

⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.^m

Arrogance Unforgiven

⁵ O house of Jacobⁿ,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD.^o

⁶ For thou hast rejected thy people,
the house of Jacob,
because they are full of diviners^p from the east
and of soothsayers^q like the Philistines,
and they strike hands with foreigners.^r

⁷ Their land is filled with silver and gold,
and there is no end to their treasures^s;
their land is filled with horses,
and there is no end to their chariots.^t

⁸ Their land is filled with idols;
they bow down to the work of their hands,
to what their own fingers have made.^u

⁹ So man is humbled,
and men are brought low—
forgive them not!^v

The Lord Exalted on That Day

¹⁰ Enter into the rock,
and hide in the dust
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the glory of his majesty.^w

¹¹ The haughty looks of man shall be brought low,
and the pride of men shall be humbled;
and the LORD alone will be exalted
in that day.^x

¹² For the LORD of hosts has a day^y
against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up and high;^z

¹³ against all the cedars of Lebanon,
lofty and lifted up;
and against all the oaks of Bashan;^{aa}

¹⁴ against all the high mountains,
and against all the lofty hills;^{bb}

¹⁵ against every high tower,
and against every fortified wall;

¹⁶ against all the ships of Tarshish^{cc},
and against all the beautiful craft^{dd ee}.

¹⁷ And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled,
and the pride of men shall be brought low;
and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.^{ff}

Shake the World of Men and Idols

¹⁸ And the idols shall utterly pass away.^{gg}

¹⁹ And men shall enter the caves of the rocks
and the holes of the ground,
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the glory of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.^{hh}

²⁰ In that day men will cast forth
their idols of silver and their idols of gold,
which they made for themselves to worship,
to the moles and to the bats,ⁱⁱ

²¹ to enter the caverns of the rocks
and the clefts of the cliffs,

from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the glory of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.^{jj}

²² Turn away from man
in whose nostrils is breath,
for of what account is he?^{kk}

Revised Standard Version (RSV)

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The second chapter of Isaiah contains a promise of redemption for the people of God, and yet also a time of trial before that comes to pass. Verses 1-5 contain the promise, while the latter verses the time of trial.

1. What is the “Mountain of the Lord” and where is it?
2. What do verses 1-5 tell us about gentiles (the nations or non-Jews)?
3. What will the world be like when the nations are coming to the Mountain of the Lord?
4. What do you think it means to “strike hands with foreigners” in v. 6?
5. What are the offenses of Judah?
6. What will happen on the day of the Lord?

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^a The Titles of the lessons in this study are borrowed from those given by **Jhan Moskowitz** of Jews for Jesus to the chapter titles in his recorded study of Isaiah upon which much of this study is based. I owe a great debt to Jhan, my late friend and brother in the Lord, who was called Home before his time, not only for much of the work in this study, but also for giving me a whole new perspective on the Scriptures and the Jewish Messiah. Jhan’s original recordings may be downloaded from the Jews for Jesus web site. <http://jewsforjesus.org/jhan-moskowitz>

It is likely that much of Isaiah was first spoken, or recited, and then written down and collected into the form we have today. While we do not know for certain why, the prophets, including Isaiah wrote largely in poetic form. It may have been easier to remember, and be able to repeat, the prophecies when in verse than had they been in prose. The poetic form allows the use of imagery and other poetic devices which are less available in prose. We do not know whether any of Isaiah’s verse was set to music.

Chapters 1-5 of Isaiah are not tied to any specific historical events, but are more to paint the picture of the times in which Isaiah ministered.

^b (27) Jer 22:3-4. Something, or someone, is “redeemed” by the “**kinsman-redeemer**”, not by any action of the one redeemed. Gn 48:16; Ex 6:6; Lv 25:47-55,27:9-25; Nu 5:8,35:9-34. The entire Book of Ruth is the story of a kinsman-redeemer who will become an ancestor of both David and Jesus. The kinsman-redeemer had both the right and the duty to act for a relative who was in trouble, danger or in need of vindication. God is described in ways consistent with being kinsman-redeemer for mankind as Creator and Father, Ex 4:22-23, Dt 32:6, Deliverer, Ex 20:2, ultimate owner of the Land, Lv 25:23, one who hears the innocent

crying out for vengeance, Dt 19:10,21:6-9, and the covenant King, Ex 6:2-8. David, in his use of the term, Ps 19:14,103:4, referred to the actions of his great-grandfather Boaz, Ru 4:9-10. Jesus is not only God, but is even more our kinsman as fully human, Heb 2:11-18,4:14-16.

^c (28) Jb 31:3; Ps 1:6,9:5; 2Th 1:8-9.

^d **Oaks and Gardens** – Likely a reference to the oak groves and gardens connected with their idolatrous and adulterous heathen worship. 2Ki 16:4; Ezk 6:13.

^e (29) Is 57:5,65:3; Hos 4:13-19.

^f (30) Jer 17:8.

^g **Tow** – a term for a stage in the making of thread. The Hebrew word is often translated as tinder (for making a fire). Perhaps the thread is easily set on fire and could be used as tinder. This meaning makes sense in light of the rest of the verse.

^h (31) Jdg 16:9; Mt 3:12; Mk 9:43.

ⁱ (1) This verse may introduce just Chapter 2, or Chapters 2-4, or Chapters 2-12. Both here and at 1:1, the Hebrew word translated “saw” literally means “saw in a vision”. It is a subject of some debate as to why Isaiah may have used the introductory words signaling a vision again in Chapter 2 when he had just used them to introduce Chapter 1. Some speculate that this was because Chapter 1 was one unit, and chapters 2-5 another unit published or recited at a different time, which were now combined into this larger work.

^j **Latter Days** – 2:2-4; See, Mi 4:1-5 for a similar description of the times to come after the restoration promised by God. Gn 49:1; Nu 24:14; Dt 31:29; Rv 21. In this poem about the latter, or last, days, we look to the coming of the Messiah. Moses had shown the people a blessing and a curse, Dt 11:26-28,30:15-20. They were experiencing the curse due to their turning away from God. He paints a picture here of restoration and the return of the blessing by returning to God.

^k **Mountain of the House of the Lord** – Temples are seen as the dwellings of God. Jerusalem, where the Temple was located on Mt. Moriah, is described as the cosmic mountain of God. 2Ch 5:1ff; Ps 48:1-2; Ezk 20:40,40:2; Mi 4:7. It will be a place where peoples of all nations will come for instruction in Torah, and in which disputes between nations will be settled. There will be peace among the nations. Jer. 3:17. During this time it was thought that God dwelt on mountains. The God of Abraham would be above all mountains, and thus all gods. The poem paints an image of all the nations streaming “up” to Jerusalem to hear the Word of the Lord. While the nations will go to Jerusalem, the Word of the Lord, the Torah, will go out from Jerusalem. The result of this will be peace as we all worship the same God. Isaiah is saying that this is our future, the future for the remnant of God’s people who remain. Weapons are beaten into farm implements is an image that shows things of war being turned into things of peace. Farming implements can be associated with the return to the Garden, also symbolic of a reversal of the curse. This is also a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, Gn 12:1-3, that the children of Abraham would be blessed and be a blessing to all nations. The line of David the King, the seed of Abraham, from whom Jesus came, is very closely associated with Jerusalem which David founded.

^l (3) Zec 8:20-23; Lk 24:47; Jn 4:22.

^m (4) Ps 72:3-7; Is 32:18; Mi 4:3; Jl 3:10; Hos 2:18; Zec 9:10.

ⁿ **House of Jacob** – Common designation for the entire Jewish people as a nation. Gn 32:28; Ex 19:3; Ps 114:1; Is 58:1.

^o (5) Jn 8:12; Eph 5:8; 1Jn 1:5.

^p **Diviners** – Hebrew lacks this word which is contained in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures.

^q **Soothsayers** (literally, but ironically, “truth-tellers”); 1Sm 6:2; 2Ki 1:2. **Diviners and Soothsayers** had been proscribed, Dt 18:9-14, Lv 19:26, but were nevertheless common in popular practice. 1Sm 28:8-15; Ezk 13:9.

^r (6) Dt 31:17; 2Ki 1:2,16:7-11; Pr 6:1; Mi 5:12. **Clasp hands with Foreigners** likely refers to shaking hands to seal a commercial transaction. **Verses 6-10** comprise the next song with might be called, “Unforgiven” because it describes a people who have forsaken the Lord, and who will not be able to hide when the Day of the Lord comes. The Day of the Lord which will be a glorious day for the remnant will be a terrible day for those who are not with the Lord. Isaiah describes a land full of the things of wealth and power, gold, silver, horses, chariots and idols made by man, but adds a promise that they will all be brought

low when the Lord comes. There is a contrast with the first song in which the nations of the world want to worship God, but the Children of Abraham are worshipping idols. God wants to make peace, but Judah collects weapons.

^s **Gold** – the Land prospered under Uzziah.

^t (7) Dt 17:16-17; Ps 20:7; Mi 5:10.

^u (8) Ps 115:4-8; Is 17:8; Jer 2:28; Mi 5:13-14. There is an interesting progression in verses 7-8 starting with silver and gold, through horses and chariots to idols. In a sense all are “the work of their hands” in that they are goods made or accumulated by men to increase wealth, status or power. Dt 27:15; 1Ki 10:29. These are all idols which distract us from worshipping the true God. The word “idol” originally meant in Greek a “mental image, apparition, phantom,” that is nothing real. If you trust in idols, and live in that way, Isaiah says God will not forgive you. Lk 12:13-21 tells of the rich man who kept building barns to house his excess wealth, trusting in that wealth rather than God. When you believe in things you yourself have made, and do not admit that you have sinned against God, even if God were to forgive you, you could not receive the blessing of that forgiveness because you don’t know you need it.

^v (9) Ps 49:2,62:9; Ne 4:5.

^w (10) Zec 14:5; Rv 6:15-16; 2Th 1:9. When the Lord comes, there will be nowhere to hide.

^x (11) Ps 18:27; Is 5:15; Mi 2:3; 2Co 10:5. The third poem speaks of the Lord being exalted on that Day, see also v. 17 where the phrase also ends this poem. Isaiah lists a number of things in nature that you might think are going to last forever followed by a list of man-made things which one might call great works of man, but all will be destroyed when the Lord comes. All the pride of the second song, and all the things in which pride was taken, will pass away. Isaiah is saying there can be no equality with God. All created things, including ourselves, are under Him alone who will do as He wills.

^y **Day** – In this case the **Day of the Lord**. Am 5:18-20; Ob 15; Jl 1:15; Mt 5:18. The Day of the Lord is more fully described in Isaiah Chapters 24 and 34.

^z (12) Jb 40:11; Is 24:4,24:21; Mal 4:1. Judah will not escape punishment because of their status as the Children of Abraham to whom the Promise had been given, Mt 3:7-10,23:33.

^{aa} (13) Jdg 9:15; Ezk 27:6; Zec 11:2. Lebanon is famous for its cedars, Bashan, the high mountainous plateau in northern Transjordan known for its timber. Ezk 27:3-6.

^{bb} (14) Is 30:25.

^{cc} **Ships of Tarshish** – These were especially large, sea-worthy ships which carried smelted metal to Tarshish. Tarshish comes from a word meaning “to melt or be melted” and might refer to any place that had smelting operations or any land that contained mineral deposits, though many identify it with Tartessus near the southwest coast of Spain. Jnh 1:3,4:2; 1Ki 10:22; Jer 10:9; Ezk 27:12,38:13.

^{dd} **Beautiful Craft** – Literally, “*upon all imagery of delight*” (Comp. Lv 26:1; Nu 33:52.) Probably not other ships (watercraft) but things made by men of great beauty (ornamental objects), perhaps also including things of great utility (well crafted tools, weapons, etc.).

^{ee} (16) 1Ki 10:22; Ps 48:7.

^{ff} (17) Ps 18:27; Mi 2:3; 2Co 10:5.

^{gg} (18) Is 21:9; Mi 1:7. In the last song, 18-21, when God shakes the world, men will throw away their idols which have not saved them from the wrath of God. They will recognize that everything they trusted in has failed. Having discarded the idols, people will be ready to worship the true God.

^{hh} (19) Ps 18:7,76:8-9; Hos 10:8; Hab 3:6; Hg 2:6-7; Lk 23:30; Heb 12:26; Rv 6:15-16.

ⁱⁱ (20) Lv 11:19; Dt 14:18. In that Day, the idols will be thrown away to used by unclean animals and thus polluted. This is symbolic of reversing the turning away from God that was the cause of trouble in the first place. If we have any idols, we need to throw them away and start living as though God is coming tomorrow. The idols, as long as we keep them, will prevent us from living in hope and anticipation of the coming of the Messiah.

Every one of us will be faced with the day of reckoning. Will it be a day of Shalom, of peace, or a day of terror. The universalities as whether you must believe in Jesus to get to heaven saying that a just god will not save some sinners but not others. But if heaven is the relationship with Jesus, facing and loving him, then a non-believer would not think that is heaven. All our relationships are just a shadow of our relationship with God in heaven. Thus, in Jhan's words, you "could" be hanging out in heaven with those who do worship God, and going through the same things as they do, and yet perceive the place quite differently if you don't have that relationship with God that makes the place heaven. If you show up that day without a relationship with God, what will it be like to be with God against whom you have sinned?

^{jj} (21) 2Th 1:9. Ultimately it is not possible to hide from God, Gn 3:8.

^{kk} (22) Ps 100:5,146:3; Jb 27:3; Jas 4:14. God gives man life and breath, Gn 2:7. Isaiah is not saying here that man is insignificant, but that man's life, and everything about it, is dependent on God. We are but a small speck in the universe. God, not man, is the measure of all things.