

ISAIAH_2

The Messages of God Concerning Judah & Jerusalem

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The vision-messages that God gave to Isaiah came when the northern kingdom of Israel had already been conquered and overthrown by the Assyrians. The southern kingdom of Judah had been paying tribute to Assyria for several years and was constantly under threat from the Assyrians.

Eventually, 46 walled cities would be destroyed and over 200,000 captives would be taken away by the Assyrian army leaving the city of Jerusalem as Judah's last stronghold. And although the Assyrians would be stopped by God and never take the city, judgment would come and the city was eventually conquered by Babylon.

I. There's Going to be a Glorious Future for God's People.

Isaiah 2:1-4 – “This is a vision that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: **In the last days**, the mountain of the Lord's house will be the highest of all— the most important place on earth. It will be raised above the other hills, and people from all over the world will stream there to worship. People from many nations will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to **the mountain of the Lord**, to the house of Jacob's God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths.’ For the Lord's teaching will go out from Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem. The Lord will mediate between nations and will settle international disputes. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore.” (NLT)

“In the last days” is a critical phrase because it refers to the days of human life on this earth. These days will at one time come to an end and at the last part of human history; the prophetic utterances of the LORD will be fulfilled. This phrase is often employed in the Old Testament regarding the time when the Messianic salvation will finally be accomplished.

2 Peter 3:3-9 – “Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. They will say, ‘What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.’ They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed. But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.” (NLT)

It also applies in the eschatological sense to the period of time which began with the first advent of Jesus Christ. This is seen in the following scriptures:

Acts 2:17 – “‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.’” (NLT)

Hebrews 1:2 – “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” (NIV)

“The mountain of the LORD” is another significant phrase because it gives us a clear indication of God’s timetable. When Zion in Jerusalem becomes increasingly important we are nearer to the second coming of Christ.

The “mountain of the LORD” not only refers to the seat of the government or kingdom of God in the earth, which now may be thought of as insignificant, but will one day surpass all other forms of human government. It also speaks of the “New Man” Christianity superseding all other religious belief systems because Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Eph. 2:14-16 – “For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.” (NLT)

Even Sinai, the mount of the law, will recede into the background for the Jewish people, because the new covenant is superior to the old.

Already, in ever increasing numbers, God’s grace is motivating Christians from nations all over the world to gather and worship the LORD at the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

And once the Lord returns, His teaching will go out from His holy hill in Jerusalem and He will mediate and settle international disputes. His teachings will result in peace between the nations and people will cease to train for war. What a glorious future awaits the people of God.

Now, from his vision of the future, Isaiah turns to the present spiritual condition of Judah and the reasons for their impending judgment. And the thing I see is that:

II. America’s Corruption Mirrors Judah’s Corruption

Isaiah 2:5-11 – “Come, descendants of Jacob, let us **walk in the light of the Lord!** For the Lord has rejected his people, the descendants of Jacob, because they have filled their land with **practices from the East** and with **sorcerers**, as the Philistines do. They have made **alliances with pagans**. Israel is full of silver and gold; there is **no end to its treasures**. Their land is full of **warhorses**; there is no end to its **chariots**. Their land is full of **idols**; the people worship things they have **made with their own hands**. So now they will be humbled, and all will be brought low— do not forgive them. Crawl into caves in the rocks. Hide in the dust from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty. **Human pride** will be **brought down**, and human **arrogance** will be **humbled**. Only the Lord will be exalted on that day of judgment.” (NLT)

The invitation is to walk in the light that the Lord provides, but the young people of this generation, living in a decadent Western pluralistic culture, gets anything but the light of the Lord. So, you youth that are blessed to be home for Christmas, take note: you have to strive and work at it in order to walk in the light of the Lord. Remember Moses’ admonition?

Deut. 6:5-9, 12 – “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your **hearts**. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them

on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates...be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” (NIV)

This is a special admonition for our high school and college students. Spend time listening to music that ministers spiritual life to your spirit; music that encourages character transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Dump the music that drags your thoughts into the gutter.

Get involved in Bible studies and prayer groups and don't let your Sundays go by without being in church worshipping the Lord of Hosts – your Savior.

Memorize the four verses that list the three steps for success, found in Romans 6:6, 11, 13-14. **Know** that you were crucified with Christ; **reckon** upon that fact; and **actively yield** the members of your body to Christ; then sin, the rebellious nature, will not have dominion over you. If you are faithful to walk out those three steps, you will live a victorious Christian life of joy in Christ.

The spiritual condition of Judah and Jerusalem in the 8th century BC is quite different from the Zion of the future. Judah and Jerusalem have introduced all manner of foreign practices from the East, which have encouraged them to forsake the LORD. Yet, in spite of their waywardness, God continues to appeal to them to “Come” – draw near so you can walk in the light of My counsel.”

Now, although Solomon's Temple stands in its magnificent beauty and the sacrifices are continuing to be offered by the priests, the people have ceased to delight in the law of God.

There are three reasons given by God for the present spiritual condition of the people. Instead of trusting in the Lord for wisdom and guidance; in their broad-mindedness, they have (1) filled the land with the practices from the East; (2) embraced sorcerers; (3) made alliances with pagans.

And because of these sins, the people are surrounded by oppression and wickedness.

Deut. 18:9-14 – “When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, be very careful not to imitate the detestable customs of the nations living there. For example, never sacrifice your son or daughter as a burnt offering. And do not let your people practice fortune-telling, or use sorcery, or interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord. It is because the other nations have done these detestable things that the Lord your God will drive them out ahead of you. But you must be blameless before the Lord your God. The nations you are about to displace consult sorcerers and fortune-tellers, but the Lord your God forbids you to do such things.” (NLT)

The sins of Judah are now the sins of America. For Judah it was the detestable practices of Babylon and for America it is the philosophical ideas behind the detestable practices of the religions of the East, the resurrected philosophies of power and control through the witchcraft of sorcerers and the fact that we are presently making treaties and alliances with godless nations that have no intention of keeping their promises.

We are possibly the richest nation in the world with a vast array of warplanes and military machinery, which Isaiah describes as warhorses and chariots. We have put our trust in our military might to keep us safe, but that is a false hope for us as it was for Israel and Judah.

Our land is full of idols. **What is an idol?** An idol is anything that has such a controlling position in your heart that you can spend most of your passion and energy, and your financial resources on it without a second thought.

For example, **physical beauty** is a pleasant thing, but if you “deify” it, if you make it the most important thing in your life, then you have Aphrodite, not just beauty.

The biblical concept of idolatry is an extremely sophisticated idea, integrating intellectual, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual categories.

There are **personal idols**: family, money, power, achievement, health, fitness, and physical beauty. Many look to these things for the hope, meaning, and fulfillment that only God can provide.

There are **cultural idols**: military power, technological progress, and economic prosperity. They promise us safety, peace, and happiness if only we base our lives on them.

There are also **intellectual idols** (ideologies): European intellectuals in the early twentieth century became convinced of Rousseau’s view of the innate goodness of human nature, that our social problems were the result of poor education. But World War II shattered that illusion.

Beatrice Webb (architect of Britain’s modern welfare state) wrote: “I have staked all on the essential goodness of human nature...” [Now thirty-five years later I realize] how permanent are the evil impulses and instincts in man—how little you can count on changing some of these, i.e. the appeal of wealth and power.... No amount of knowledge or science will be of any avail unless we can curb the bad impulse.”

In **1933**, in his book *The Shape of Things to Come*, **H.G. Wells** was appalled by the selfishness and violence of European nations and he believed the only hope was for intellectuals to seize control and run a compulsory educational program stressing peace, justice, and equity.

But when you “stake everything” on human goodness, you are putting it in the place of God.

Though we may think we live in a secular world, the personal, cultural, and intellectual idols we’ve erected are the gods of our age, and they hold title to the functional trust of our hearts.

The only way a people can free themselves from the destructive influence of counterfeit gods is to turn back to the true and living God; who has revealed Himself in the created universe, the Holy Bible and through His only Son, Jesus of Nazareth.

The Living God who has revealed Himself in the Son, is the only one who can forgive you of your sins and save you by giving you a new nature.

In the day the Lord reveals His majesty, the proud will be brought low and the arrogant will be humbled. You can be certain of that. Judgment is set before sinful man as a terrible reality.

III. The Day of the LORD

Isaiah 2:12-22 – “For the Lord of Heaven’s Armies has a day of reckoning. He will punish the proud and mighty and bring down everything that is exalted. He will cut down the tall cedars of Lebanon and all the mighty oaks of Bashan. He will level all the high mountains and all the lofty hills. He will break down every high tower and every fortified wall. He will destroy all the great trading ships and every magnificent vessel. Human pride will be humbled, and human arrogance will be brought down. Only the Lord will be exalted on that day of judgment. Idols will completely disappear. When the Lord rises to shake the earth, his enemies will crawl into holes in the ground. They will hide in caves in the rocks from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty. On that day of judgment they will abandon the gold and silver idols they made for themselves to worship. They will leave their gods to the rodents and bats, while they crawl away into caverns and hide among the jagged rocks in the cliffs. They will try to escape

the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty as he rises to shake the earth. Don't put your trust in mere humans. They are as frail as breath. What good are they?" (NLT)

In the day of God's judgment, mankind will be held accountable, but even the creation will be subject to God's wrath. The tall cedars and the mighty oak trees that man has admired will be brought low; even the mountains and lofty hills will not withstand the shaking of God's judgments.

Defensive towers and fortified walls will not provide safety. Great cruise ships that can travel the oceans will not provide a way of escape.

Rev. 6:15-17 – “Then everyone—the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy, the powerful, and every slave and free person—all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to survive?’ ” (NLT)

And the various kinds of idols we pay homage to today: such as musicians, singers, athletes, and movie stars, will completely lose their attraction and disappear in the light of God's judgments in the earth.

Nothing that man has trusted in will provide security for him in the day that God executes His judgment. The wealthy will not be able to buy their way to safety; instead people will simply run for the hills in an attempt to escape leaving their possessions and treasures behind.

God, through His prophet Isaiah is commanding us to cease and desist from placing confidence in man. Our idols are simply the products of human ingenuity and human creative powers, so why would we ever think that could compete with the majesty of God's love and creative power?

When we exalt man and man's accomplishments, as secular humanism does, we are setting man in opposition to God. So, Isaiah is endeavoring to show us the folly of trusting in man instead of in God. The Psalmist had this revelation also and wrote about it.

Psalms 146:3-10 – “When they breathe their last, they return to the earth, and all their plans die with them. But joyful are those who have the God of Israel as their helper, whose hope is in the Lord their God. He made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. He keeps every promise forever. He gives justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry. The Lord frees the prisoners. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are weighed down. The Lord loves the godly. The Lord protects the foreigners among us. He cares for the orphans and widows, but he frustrates the plans of the wicked. The Lord will reign forever. He will be your God, O Jerusalem, throughout the generations. Praise the Lord!” (NLT)

When mankind places his confidence and hope in a man, in its crudest form this confidence becomes idolatry, just as it did in Isaiah's day. We may not create a molded figure and bow down to it, but we have our idols just the same.

Hebrews 12:1-3 – “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross,

disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up." (NLT)

He endured the cross and disregarded the shame people sought to heap on him, but He now sits in the seat of honor. He withstood the hostility people threw at him and now He sits beside God's throne. Can we follow in His footsteps and endure the shame and hostility of men?

Let's not grow weary or give up in our efforts to offer the Good News of salvation in Jesus to everyone we know.

