

The LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty...

It is easy right now to see President Trump as the proud and haughty one.
The Democrats and the Never-Trumpers get to say “ha-ha – he got his!!”

The LORD of hosts has a day against *all* that is proud and lofty!

As we reflect on our words and deeds over this last election season,
we would do well to humble ourselves before the LORD,
and keep our eyes fixed upon his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ!

Introduction: The Call to Walk in the Light (2:1-5)

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² *It shall come to pass in the latter days*

*that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up 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,^[a]

and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ *He shall judge between the nations,*

*and shall decide disputes 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 anymore.*

⁵ *O house of Jacob,*

*come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD.*

Chapters 2-4 set forth

“the word that Isaiah the son of Amoz *saw* concerning Judah and Jerusalem.”

The focus of this vision is the “latter days.”

Jerusalem’s present is pretty dismal.

Her prospects are bleak

In the time of David and Solomon (a couple hundred years earlier),
the Assyrian and Egyptian empires had fallen on hard times.

The Assyrian empire had collapsed –
and for more than a hundred years, the Assyrians were a small kingdom in Iraq.
Usually when one empire collapsed it was because they were defeated by a stronger one!

But in the case of the “Bronze Age Collapse” – *all the empires* collapsed.
Historians still debate the reasons –
but in the providence of God the result was that there was room in Canaan
for an Israelite king to arise and build quite a kingdom!

But after the division of Israel under Rehoboam –
when Jeroboam became king of the ten northern tribes of Israel –
it is also not surprising to see the kingdoms of the nations arise once more.

Assyria has regained its empire.
Assyria is looming in the east,
and Egypt is making a comeback in the south.
And Judah’s neighbors are getting antsy.

Syria and Israel want to form a coalition against Assyria –
and so they are breathing threats from the north,
The vassal states of Edom and Moab are rebellious,
and the Philistines still harass the lowlands.
Judah is a tiny kingdom ringed by enemies.

And yet Isaiah sees a vision of the latter days,
when the mountain of the house of Yahweh–Jerusalem–
“Shall be established as the highest of the mountains;
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it.”

There will come a day when Zion will be the center of worship for the nations.
Yahweh will be acknowledged as the true God.
No longer will Jerusalem be the feeble capital of a beleaguered little kingdom,
but the city of God will be the exalted above all the cities of the earth!

And many peoples will say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” (2:3)
The nations will desire to hear the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.
And because they will accept Yahweh as the judge of the nations,
they will no longer need their weapons.
“He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes 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 anymore.” (2:4)

This is the vision that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

These words also appear almost verbatim in Micah 4:1-4.

Since Isaiah is a contemporary of Micah, there is no way to know who used them first.
But Isaiah uses it to call the house of Jacob to repentance.

One day the nations will say “come, let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob;”

Someday the nations will seek to learn the law of Zion

so that they might walk in the paths of Yahweh.

If the nations will seek those paths, shouldn't the house of Jacob?

“O House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of Yahweh.”

This echoes the language of Psalm 119:105

“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

The nations are ignorant and must learn the law of Zion,
but Judah knows better.

Judah must simply live up to what he already knows.

In the same way *we* must live up to what *we* already know.

Let us walk in the light of the LORD.

But there are two basic problems with Judah.

We heard of those last time.

In chapter one we saw that Judah's worship was unacceptable
because of their failure to provide justice for the poor.

But here in chapters 2-4 Isaiah expands on the problem.

Judah has been compromised by idolatry and oppression.

Chapter two focuses on the idolatry of Judah, while chapter three deals with oppression.

Put simply, God's people have become like the nations.

1. The Coming Day of the LORD (2:6-22)

a. God's People Have Become Like the Nations (v6-9)

*⁶ For you have rejected your people,
the house of Jacob,
because they are full of things from the east
and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines,
and they strike hands with the children of foreigners.*

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

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

⁹ *So man is humbled,
and each one is brought low—
do not forgive them!*

The reason why God has rejected his people is because

“they are full of things from the east.” (2:6)

What was in the east?

Assyria and Babylon

Judah was turning to fortunetellers, like the Philistines,
and they were entering alliance “with the children of foreigners.”

In their fear of the surrounding nations,

Judah was forgetting their God.

He had promised that he would protect and deliver them,
but only if they would trust in him alone.

But instead Judah was “full of things from the east.”

Foreign alliances had definite advantages for trade and commerce.

“Their land is filled with silver and gold
and there is no end to their treasures.”

Foreign alliances had definite advantages for military strength.

“Their land is filled with horses,
And there is no end to their chariots”

Foreign alliances bring not only wealth and strength,
but also idolatry.

“Their land is filled with idols;
They bow down to the work of their hands,
to what their own fingers have made.”

When our focus is on our economic and military success,
we will turn away from the LORD our God.

And so Isaiah calls out to God,

“So man is humbled, and each one is brought low—do not forgive them!” (2:9)

That sounds harsh – doesn’t it?

“Do not forgive them!”?

Isaiah is saying *don’t just forgive them* – don’t just pretend this didn’t happen!

If they *repent* – if they *turn away* from their sin –
oh, well, by all means!

Forgive those who repent!!

But don't forgive those who have willfully turned their backs on the LORD,
and are worshipping the gods of the nations.
In other words – don't let them get away with it!

Our text tonight has something of a refrain with two themes.
Verse ten introduces the first:

i. Enter into the Rock (v10)

*¹⁰ Enter into the rock
and hide in the dust
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the splendor of his majesty.*

Isaiah warns Judah of the coming wrath of the LORD.
When God comes in judgment,
that will be a terrifying sight.

Enter into the rock and hide in the dust.
The LORD God had formed the man of dust from the ground.
Now he will hide in the dust from whence he came!

God had walked with Adam in the garden.
That was not a terrifying sight.
At least – not until Adam sinned.
When he sinned, then the coming of the LORD was terrifying!

This language will be taken up by our Lord Jesus (Lk 23:30)
when he speaks of those who will call on the mountains to fall on them!
John uses this language as well in Revelation 6.

The presence of the LORD is a comfort to those who long to be near him!
The presence of the LORD is a scary thing to those who have rebelled against him!

And then verse 11 gives the second theme of the refrain:

ii. The Haughtiness of Man Shall Be Humbled (v11)

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

The LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty.
And in that day the LORD *alone* will be exalted.

Isaiah will often emphasize this *singular* character of God.
He *alone* will be exalted.

If you will not humble yourself and serve the LORD, then prepare to be humbled.
We all tend to think more highly of ourselves than we ought.

We all tend to think that *we* are right – and our opponents are wrong.
And so we exalt ourselves and put down others –
and if anyone dares to interfere with our self-aggrandizing perception –
we put them in their “proper place”!

But God will not allow this to continue forever.
Again – when Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden,
the presence of the LORD brought peace and joy!
That’s what the presence of the LORD *ought* to do!

As long as we are stubborn – as long as we are proud – as long as we are haughty –
we are setting ourselves up for a fall...

And then verses 12-16 consist of a single sentence explaining why:

b. The Day of the LORD Against All That Is Lifted Up (v12-16)

¹² *For the LORD of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low;*
¹³ *against all the cedars of Lebanon,
lofty and lifted up;
and against all the oaks of Bashan;*
¹⁴ *against all the lofty mountains,
and against all the uplifted hills;*
¹⁵ *against every high tower,
and against every fortified wall;*
¹⁶ *against all the ships of Tarshish,
and against all the beautiful craft.*

Isaiah points to all those things that are high and lofty.
The greatest trees—the cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan –
these were used for carving idols;
The highest mountains—that were used for pagan worship;
The mighty cities—that used their power to oppress the weak and helpless;
The greatest economic power of wealth—that was used to fund idolatry.

The LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty.
Think of the “high and lofty” things of our day!

What are the fortified walls that people trust in?
Science will save us.
Technology will save us.
Education will save us.
Just as Israel fell into the trap of trusting the merchant ships of Tarshish
to provide for all that they wanted or needed –
so we tend to trust in the our economic power –
It used to be our shopping malls...
now it's our online shopping...

but either way, we tend to find our identity in our things –
our homes, our cars, our devices, our entertainments...

All of these things are good things.
What's wrong with the cedars of Lebanon?
They were used to build the temple in Jerusalem!
What's wrong with the fortified walls that David built?
What's wrong with the beautiful craft of the artisan?

In themselves?
Nothing!

What's wrong is the haughtiness of man.
When *we* exalt the creature above the Creator –
when *we* put our hope in our stuff, in our status, in the things that God made –
that's why the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty!

Therefore verse 17 echoes verse 11:

ii. The Haughtiness of Man Shall Be Humbled (v17)

*¹⁷ And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled,
and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low,
and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.*

Pride goes before a fall.
It's not just the obvious cases!
It's *every case* – it's *every time* we exalt ourselves.

It's every time I think "I know what's best – so everyone else needs to do what I want!"
That is why humility is so important.

Humility says "I am not the one who knows best.
God is the one who knows best – so I need to trust *him*."

The one who exalts himself will be humbled.
The one who humbles himself before the LORD will be exalted.

And the result is that the idols shall utterly pass away (v18).

i. People Shall Enter into the Rocks (v18-19)

¹⁸ *And the idols shall utterly pass away.*

This line is added right in between the two parts of the refrain.

The word for idols is “elilim” – the word for God is “Elohim.”
There are things that sound alike – but are entirely opposite!

This reminds us of the central problem of Isaiah 2 –
which indeed, is the central problem of the book of Isaiah –
and the central problem for humanity –
namely, we love something else besides the LORD our God.

We do not love the LORD our God with *all* our hearts.
Our hearts are divided.

And when we have divided hearts,
we find ourselves fleeing from the terror of the LORD:

¹⁹ *And people shall enter the caves of the rocks
and the holes of the ground,^[b]
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the splendor of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.*

In verse 10 it was entering the rock and hiding in the dust.
Now it is entering the *caves* of the rocks and the holes of the ground.

Because the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty.

And when he comes – those who have exalted themselves will get as low as they can!

c. In That Day Mankind Will Cast Away Their Idols (v20)

²⁰ *In that day mankind will cast away
their idols of silver and their idols of gold,
which they made for themselves to worship,
to the moles and to the bats,*

Their “elilim” they will cast away.

They will recognize that their idols are useless –
and so they will cast away their idols to the moles and to the bats –
critters that hide in the dark –
so that they themselves may

i. To Enter the Rocks (v21)

²¹ *to enter the caverns of the rocks
and the clefts of the cliffs,
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the splendor of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.*

This is the third time that Isaiah uses this refrain.
Those who have exalted themselves will be humbled.

By this point, the point should be clear – but Isaiah says it bluntly in verse 22:

d. So Stop Regarding Man! (v22)

²² *Stop regarding man
in whose nostrils is breath,
for of what account is he?*

Isaiah calls Judah to stop worrying about the nations.
Do not fear men.
You must be more concerned with what God thinks, than with what others think.

Indeed, those who regard man more than God have already fallen prey to idolatry.
When you worry about what others think – you are putting your trust in man.

So “stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he? (2:22)

This is why John tells us that when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
he did not entrust himself to man – even to those who believed in him! –
because he knew all people – and he knew what was in man.

You can see the connection between Isaiah and Proverbs –
“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding,
in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.”

- 2. The Coming Judgment upon Jerusalem (3:1-4:1)**
- 3. Jerusalem’s Purification (4:2-6)**