

FUTURE PROMISES AND PRESENT PROBLEMS

ISAIAH 2-3

A PROMISE FOR THE FUTURE

*"Now it will come about that in the last days,
The mountain of the house of the Lord
Will be established as the chief of the mountains,
And will be raised above the hills;
And all the nations will stream to it.
And many peoples will come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountains of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
That He may teach us concerning His ways,
And that we may walk in His paths."
For the law will go forth from Zion,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
And He will judge between the nations,
And will render decisions for many peoples;
And they will hammer their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
And never again will they learn war." (Isaiah 2:2-4).*

This passage is repeated nearly word for word in Micah 4:1-3. Did Micah quote from Isaiah or the other way around? We do not know and it is not really important.

1. The Mountain of the House of the Lord.

The idea of the Mountain of God goes back to the days of Moses. When the Lord spoke to Moses through a burning bush, the location of that incident was said to be "Horeb, the mountain of God" (Exodus 3:1).

It was to this place that Moses returned with the Children of Israel following the exodus from Egypt. And it was here that Moses received the Law from the hand of the Lord.

Now Isaiah says that there is coming a day when, not only the Children of Israel, but ALL nations will come to the mountain of the house of the Lord.

This is not a reference to the literal Mount Sinai. That is clear because Isaiah speaks, not merely of the “mountain of the Lord” but rather, of the “mountain of the HOUSE of the Lord.”

The imagery which he uses in a COMBINATION of Mount Sinai and the Temple. As the Law went forth from Mount Sinai, so also law will go forth from Mount Zion (note that the definite article is absent in verse 3).

The city of Jerusalem is surrounded upon all sides by mountains. Although it is itself upon a mountain ridge, it is not the highest. There are several surrounding mountains which are higher. But the picture here is of the mountain of the house of the Lord - the Temple Mount - being raised up above the surrounding mountains.

What does it all mean? How are we to understand this prophecy?

This is a Messianic prophecy. Christ is the House of God — the Temple which was destroyed and which was raised up again in three days. He is the One who said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32). This passage tells us that there is coming a day when all men would turn to God; when the throne of God would be recognized by all.

But that is not all. This also has a more immediate fulfillment. It is seen in the identity of the House of God as mentioned in verse 2. What is the house of God today? It is the CHURCH. *For it is time for judgment to begin with **the household** (τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ Θεοῦ) **of God**; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17).* Just in case there are some who would not wish to recognize Peter's words as having reference to the church, Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:15, *I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*

What is the house of God today? It is the church. This means that the exhortation that is given to believers in the Old Testament will also apply to the church today.

2. A Time of Peace.

*And they will hammer their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
And never again will they learn war." (Isaiah 2:4).*

Isaiah foretells a time of peace when nation will not lift up sword against nation.

This is the direct antithesis of what Jesus foretells in Matthew 24:7 when He says that *nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*.

This is a study in contrasts. On the one hand, the gospel is a message of peace (Acts 10:36). At His birth, the angels announced peace on earth (Luke 2:14) and it is through Him that we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). On the other hand, He tells us in Matthew 10:34 that He did not come to bring peace on the earth, but a sword. We are to try to be at peace with all men (Romans 12:18), but ultimate peace will come only at Christ's return.

AN APPLICATION FOR THE PRESENT

Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the LORD. (Isaiah 2:5).

This is the practical application of the first four verses. It is a charge for God's people to change the way they live NOW.

Isaiah continues by detailing the sins of Israel:

- 6 *For Thou hast abandoned Thy people, the house of Jacob,
Because they are filled with influences from the east,
And they are soothsayers like the Philistines,
And they strike bargains with the children of foreigners.*
- 7 *Their land has also been filled with silver and gold,
And there is no end to their treasures;
Their land has also been filled with horses,
And there is no end to their chariots.*
- 8 *Their land has also been filled with idols;
They worship the work of their hands,
That which their fingers have made.*
- 9 *So the common man has been humbled,
And the man of importance has been abased,
But do not forgive them.* (Isaiah 2:6-9).

The Israelites were called to be different. They were to stand out as beacons of light in a world of darkness. But instead, they had themselves been influenced by the evils of the world in which they lived. They had been drawn away by the lure of business and of security and they had begun to worship those things that were worshiped by the pagan world.

WARNING FOR THE FUTURE

*Enter the rock and hide in the dust
From the terror of the Lord
And from the splendor of His majesty.
The proud look of man will be abased,
And the loftiness of man will be humbled,
And the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.
(Isaiah 2:10-11).*

The limestone formations around Jerusalem are filled with caves in which the Israelites would hide themselves in times of danger (Judges 6:2; 1 Samuel 13:6).

This symbolism is taken up in the book of Revelation when men hide themselves “in the caves and among the rock of the mountains” and beg them to “fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Revelation 6:15).

Verses 12-18 describe the judgment of God against all those things upon which men were placing their trust.

12 *For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning
Against everyone who is proud and lofty,
And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased.*
13 *And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up,
Against all the oaks of Bashan,*
14 *Against all the lofty mountains,
Against all the hills that are lifted up,*
15 *Against every high tower,
Against every fortified wall,*
16 *Against all the ships of Tarshish,
And against all the beautiful craft.*
17 *And the pride of man will be humbled,
And the loftiness of men will be abased,
And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.*
18 *But the idols will completely vanish. (Isaiah 2:12-18).*

Verse 12 calls for a “day of reckoning.” This elsewhere is described as “the Day of the Lord.” It is God’s day of judgment upon the sins of men.

Note in verse 13 that the Lord is said to be against the cedars of Lebanon and against the oaks of Bashan. It isn’t that God is anti-ecology, but He passes judgment against all those things that had become a source of pride.

Verse 18 concludes with the presence of idolatry that would ultimately be banished by the coming of the Lord.

- 19 *And men will go into caves of the rocks,
And into holes of the ground
Before the terror of the LORD,
And before the splendor of His majesty,
When He arises to make the earth tremble.*
- 20 *In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats
Their idols of silver and their idols of gold,
Which they made for themselves to worship,*
- 21 *In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs,
Before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty,
When He arises to make the earth tremble.*
- 22 *Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils;
For why should he be esteemed? (Isaiah 2:19-22).*

Once again we return to the motif of men hiding themselves from the judgment of God amidst the caves and holes in the earth.

Verse 22 is missing from the Septuagint and is regarded by some as having been a marginal notation.

To what does this prophecy refer? Certainly its ultimate fulfillment can be seen in the future return of Christ, but it had a more immediate fulfillment in Isaiah's day. This is explained in chapter 3.

JUDGMENT AGAINST JERUSALEM AND JUDAH

- 1 *For behold, the Lord God of hosts is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah
Both supply and support, the whole supply of bread,
And the whole supply of water;*
- 2 *The mighty man and the warrior,
The judge and the prophet,
The diviner and the elder,*
- 3 *The captain of fifty and the honorable man,
The counselor and the expert artisan,
And the skillful enchanter.*
- 4 *And I will make mere lads their princes
And capricious children will rule over them,*
- 5 *And the people will be oppressed,
Each one by another, and each one by his neighbor;
The youth will storm against the elder,
And the inferior against the honorable.*

- 6 *When a man lays hold of his brother in his father's house, saying,
 "You have a cloak, you shall be our ruler,
 And these ruins will be under your charge,"*
7 *On that day will he protest, saying, "I will not be your healer,
 For in my house there is neither bread nor cloak;
 You should not appoint me ruler of the people." (Isaiah 3:1-7).*

The immediate judgment upon Judah and Judah did not involve a sudden immediate fall of the city and the kingdom. Rather it was one in that eroded away at the leadership and made *mere lads their princes and capricious children* to rule over them (verse 4).

There is a lesson here. It is that kingdoms and nations are often given the leadership that they deserve.

- 8 *For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen,
 Because their speech and their actions are against the LORD,
 To rebel against His glorious presence.*
9 *The expression of their faces bears witness against them.
 And they display their sin like Sodom;
 They do not even conceal it.
 Woe to them!
 For they have brought evil on themselves. (Isaiah 3:8-9).*

The plight of the nation was due to their rebellion against the Lord and against His presence, literally against *the glory of His eyes*. There is a lesson here. It is that we need to learn to practice the presence of God. We need to recognize that when no one else is looking, He is looking.

However, the situation in that day was such that there was no attempt to even try to conceal sin. Rather sin was considered "socially acceptable." It was put on display *like Sodom*.

- 10 *Say to the righteous that it will go well with them,
 For they will eat the fruit of their actions.*
11 *Woe to the wicked!
 It will go badly with him,
 For what he deserves will be done to him. (Isaiah 3:10-11).*

This is a call to repentance. God says, "You do well and it will go well with you." Paul says the same thing in Galatians 6 when he says, "What a man sows, that he will also reap."

The remainder of the chapter is a lament against the pride of the oppressors as the Lord arises and passes judgment upon social injustice.