

ISAIAH

Chapter 2

The Mountain of the Lord

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, 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.

Chs 2–4 Expresses contrast between the ideal Israel God desires and the historical reality of the Southern Kingdom (Judah and Jerusalem) in Isaiah’s day. The chapters go from the ideal to the reality and back again, showing how Israel can be restored only by God’s mercy and grace if first brought low in judgment. (TLSB)

2:1 The book of Isaiah is a series of prophecies, which the prophet collected later in his life. Here Isaiah introduces a section that extends to the end of chapter 4. The next introduction is at the beginning of chapter 6. Chapter 5 is a special insertion described as “The Song of the Vineyard” in the NIV. (PBC)

AFTER the Babylonian captivity a part of the kingdom of Judah was preserved in order that it might be the seed of the coming reign of Christ, to whom it was bound. Therefore this people could not be completely rejected until the lawful reign of Christ had come. And this is why the prophets move over from the physical kingdom to the spiritual, even though they are regarded as fanatics for not preserving the order. But he who sees the continuance of those two kingdoms will also see that the prophets have written in the best way. Accordingly, in the previous chapter Isaiah dealt with the punishments of the physical kingdom because of the sin and ungodliness of those people. Later he dealt with limited restoration after the captivity. Now follows the prophecy concerning the kingdom of Christ that is to come after the return from the captivity. But these words must be carefully noted, because the prophet speaks spiritually when he describes the church of Christ and skillfully depicts it, namely, that this kingdom is ruled by one scepter, which is the Gospel. Wherever this Gospel is proclaimed with sincerity, there this kingdom of Christ is. The Word does not deceive. Works can deceive. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Word, though He may not be present in the preacher and in the hearers. The Jews are still looking for a physical kingdom of Christ in Jerusalem. Yet in that kingdom of Christ no person or mask is shown, but only a voice and a word. The Hebrews explain לַעֲבָדָם by saying that it means “to us.” We explain it more clearly with “concerning,” as in the Epistle to the Hebrews. “To whom, that is, concerning whom,” says Isaiah, “we are speaking.” Likewise (Heb. 1:7): “To, that is, of, the angels He says, etc.” דְבַר means “word,” “speech,” “thing,” “cause,” “order,” “something.” The pronoun “this” is used rather frequently for the word mentioned last. (Luther)

the word that – Literally it might say “The word that Isaiah received. It could also say message, speech, matter, or thing. The Hebrew word is a parallel for logos in the NT. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

saw concerning – Here means perceived, or received. The manner of communication of the message to the prophet is not in any wise described. (Leopold)

Judah and Jerusalem – Isaiah was prophesying to an Israel divided into the northern and southern kingdoms. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

2:2–4† Almost identical to Mic 4:1–3. The theme of the “mountain of the LORD” (Mount Zion) is common in Isaiah; it occurs in passages that depict the coming of both Jews and Gentiles to Jerusalem (Zion) in the last days (see 11:9; 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:25; 66:20; see also 60:3–5; Zec 14:16). The peace described in this passage has been inaugurated through the coming of Christ and the preaching of the gospel, and will be consummated at the return of Christ. (CSB)

2:2 *the latter days.*† Can refer to the future generally (see Ge 49:1), but usually it has in view the Messianic era. In a real sense the last days began with the first coming of Christ (see Ac 2:17; Heb 1:2) and will be fulfilled at his second coming. (CSB)

Lit, “in the end of days.” Also translated “in days to come” (Gn 49:1; Dt 31:29), when God fulfills this prophecy. (TLSB)

When Isaiah says this he is looking ahead at the NT era. The “last days,” those future days on the horizon for the prophet, included the coming of the Messiah and the final judgment of the nations. For us in the NT era, the last days on the distant horizon of the future include the final judgment. (PBC)

You see that here the prophet speaks in a completely spiritual sense, for what he says here cannot be understood in a physical sense. Moriah is the mountain on which Solomon built the temple, on which at an earlier time Abraham was going to sacrifice his son; and he interprets it to mean “vision.” Here, he says, it shall be established because it is the highest. But when did this take place? The Jews imagine that all mountains flow together and that Mt. Moriah will be the loftiest. But this is not said here. It was necessary, however, for the church to begin at a definite place, where the Gospel would have its beginning and where Christ would come together with His disciples. Although the Gospel is not bound to a place, yet it had to begin at some place, and there has to be a place for hearing the Gospel, not however, for obtaining salvation. Hag. 2:9 says: “The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former,” because there the church had to begin, namely, in a physical place, though the church itself is not physical. That mountain, He says, will be most highly praised, because from it the church receives its name and will be called Mt. Zion. Out of a physical mountain the prophet makes one that is spiritual and a kingdom that is spiritual. Therefore the church, or the kingdom of Christ, is an exalted mountain, the house of the Lord in a spiritual sense, because there it had its beginning in a physical way. (Luther)

mountain of the house of the Lord – Not a physical reshaping of the earth or the formation of a political world empire, but a figurative description of what God will accomplish through the Messiah. The Jerusalem that God promises to create is His Church (28:16; 1Pt 2:4–8; Eph 2:19–22), made of people from all nations (v 3; Rv 5:9). Cf Rv 21:9–27. (TLSB)

God promises that God’s temple would be at head of the mountains. This was not literally so in physical terms, because the temple was lower in elevation than the surrounding hills. The

promise to make Zion the head of the mountains previews the principle of the messianic kingdom in which the least will be made the greatest and the last made the first. – For us, Zion represents the place of the means of grace – where God’s Word is preached for the repentance and faith, where sinners are baptized into the kingdom of God, and the Holy Supper is served in remembrance of the perfect sacrifice offered by the Lamb of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

In the NT era God’s kingdom, God’s Church, will have precedence over the kings of the world. It will be exalted over the kingdoms of the world. In size and sphere of activity it will excel the greatest of the world’s kingdoms. It will extend over the whole earth. And this kingdom will stand firm, never totter and perish, while the kingdoms of this world have their allotted time and then go to ruin. (Stoekhardt)

shall be established – This is a Hebraism and means confirmed, attested, made stable. Scripture is also wont to speak this way elsewhere. In 1 Kings 2:46 we read: “So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.” Thus this kingdom will also be lifted up beyond all hills, all other kingdoms, principalities, and whatever is lofty on earth. No matter how much the church is sure to be harassed and trampled underfoot by death, sins, Satan, tyranny, and heretics, yet in this trampling underfoot it shall be exalted above all mountains. For no other kingdom is so firmly established, and compared with it all other kingdoms are filthy: the Assyrians, the Greeks, the Chaldeans, the Romans, etc. For that kingdom endures, overcomes, and triumphs over death, devil, and heresies. No other kingdom can do this. But this takes place by the Word alone. Very many kingdoms have been laid waste. The church remains victorious over all kingdoms and the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18). (Luther)

all the nations shall flow to it – Isaiah here expressed another version of God’s promise to Abraham. “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3). God promised that He would send His Messiah and that the Messiah’s work would become the most important epoch in the history of Judah and Jerusalem. Because of the fulfillment, the Lord would draw all nations to come and learn of His love for sinner. The coming of people to the mountain of the Lord is God’s calling, gathering, and enlightening His church. People come to God because of the promises He fulfilled in Christ. They hear about the work of Jesus whenever they hear the gospel, the record of how God fulfilled His promises for the salvation of the world. By the power of the Holy Spirit, that gospel draws all nations to God. (PBC)

He must first draw us to Himself. The poem pictures people of all nations, a river of humanity, streaming up, up to the “mountain of the Lord.” A river flowing uphill defies the laws of nature; barring a miracle, such a thing does not happen. Sinful human beings do not spontaneously long for closeness with a holy God either. Barring a miracle, we avoid Him, we run from Him. But a miracle has occurred. Jesus was lifted up on Golgotha. Mt Calvary became in a very real sense “the mountain of the Lord.” Jesus promised that when He was lifted up, He would draw all peoples to Himself (John 12:32). He was. And He did. At Pentecost, thousands fell on their knees to proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord. They brought glory to the Father. And the Father poured out His peace into their hearts. The miracle that happened that day is the miracle that keeps on happening as long as the earth stands. Our Lord keeps calling, keeps gathering, keeps on giving people His peace, one heart at a time. (LL)

As Israel once traveled in the desert to holy Mount Sinai to receive the Law (Ex 19), the nations (fulfilling Gn 12:2–3) now travel on pilgrimage to Mount Zion. Luther: “The kingdom of Christ has been put in progress because it is placed in public view with its powers and gifts. Here one sees truth, pure doctrine, safety, peace; the Gospel is heard, and nothing can give greater joy. For

it promises an abundance of things and salvation both here and hereafter, and a man stands safe in this Word against everything that opposes him, even against the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18). Behold, these virtues should influence the nations to make them come. They are proclaimed through the Word, namely, that Christ is the King of mercy and of peace. Moses preaches the Law and is the minister of sin and death. Nobody runs to him. On the contrary, they are terrified. Christ, on the other hand, is the Minister of righteousness, of life, and of peace. Therefore the people flow to Him just as water flows by its own effort and needs no one to push it” (AE 16:29). (TLSB)

A wonderful kingdom this! The others are set up by force of arms in such a way that the nations are subjugated against their will. This kingdom, however, is not established by force, and here men are not compelled against their will. But because it will be raised up, they will flow to it; that is, the virtues of the church will attract the nations so that they come of their own free will. The kingdom of Christ has been put in progress because it is placed in public view with its powers and gifts. Here one sees truth, pure doctrine, safety, peace; the Gospel is heard, and nothing can give greater joy. For it promises an abundance of things and salvation both here and hereafter, and a man stands safe in this Word against everything that opposes him, even against the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18). Behold, these virtues should influence the nations to make them come. They are proclaimed through the Word, namely, that Christ is the King of mercy and of peace. Moses preaches the Law and is the minister of sin and death. Nobody runs to him. On the contrary, they are terrified. Christ, on the other hand, is the Minister of righteousness, of life, and of peace. Therefore the people flow to Him just as water flows by its own effort and needs no one to push it. This is what Christ says in Matt. 11:12: “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence.” This cannot be understood of a physical kingdom to such a degree as the Jews dream, for the nations hate the Jews. But when He says *all the nations*, this must not be understood of every nation. No, this is a figure of speech, as in Gen. 22:18: “By your descendants shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” The Gospel will be published among all nations, and some will be converted everywhere. For the Gospel sanctifies in every place and bears fruit, as Paul says in Col. 1:6 and as Isaiah says below in ch. 55:11: “My Word ... shall not return to me empty.” Therefore all nations shall come to this mountain, that is, to the church, which is called a mountain. To this place the souls gather through faith; for when the Gospel is heard, hearts grow soft, rejoice, and come running. (Luther)

2:3 *many people shall come* – Before He said “shall flow,” now He says “shall come” or “shall walk.” This again is a word of spontaneous sanctification. It surely will be a kingdom that is willing, free, and safe. Paul says in 2 Cor. 9:7: “God loves a cheerful giver.” In the other kingdoms there is force and demanding. Although here, in the kingdom of Christ, the body is put in subjection, yet the spirit flows freely, believes willingly, loves, does good, etc. (Luther)

come let us go – Isaiah envisions not just creation transformed, but also humanity transformed. This transformation will begin in this life through the power of the Gospel, and will be completed in eternity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

This is a technical term for pilgrimage to the sanctuary. (TLSB)

Many nations will turn to the church of God. And those who have already come and been converted will lure others to go with them and seek out the house of the God of Jacob. A mark of true repentance is this: holy zeal for God and His kingdom, then to strive and be actively engaged in winning others. (Stoekhardt)

They have a taste of the Word of God. Therefore they have a greater desire to hear the mountain of the Lord. He will teach, etc. All the words are emphatic. For Christians live every day by the Word as the body lives by food. He who does not have the Word or ponder it soon becomes a sorry wretch. If I do not reflect on a verse of a psalm or a statement of the Gospel, my heart is completely full of sins. A return to the Word guards against sins. The heart should always grind, if not something else, then at least itself. If the grain, namely, the Word of God, is good, the flour will be good, and the bread will be good. This life of ours is certainly most wretched. There is no rest, and therefore Christianity is most truly a hearing or pondering of the Word, in order that Christ may speak to us at all times. Therefore when anyone has trials that torture him in body or in soul, it is a sign that Christ is not at home, that is, is not in that person's heart. But he who wants to be set free should place Christ before him—Christ who says in Matt. 11:28: "Come to Me, all who labor," and in John 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life." When Christ speaks he is set free and is not afraid. But when Christ is absent, the trial returns. Then the slaughter and the misfortunes of men begin, and those thoughts terrify the heart. Then return to Christ, who says (John 6:37): "Him who comes to Me I will not cast out." Behold, you hear the joyful and saving Word. (Luther)

house of God – This is the temple where God promised to meet his people. This is now he embodied in the Messiah (Jn. 1:14), who dwells in the midst of his Church. (TLSB)

God of Jacob – Israel's God, the only true God. (TLSB)

he may teach – Synonyms, repeated for emphasis. See p 971. Luther: "This is what will influence and draw the nations, so that they flow to Christ and learn, namely, the Word.... From this place the scepter of Christ's kingdom was sent forth through the apostles without force in supreme peace, and the sweetness of this peace takes hold of the nations. But behold here the promise of a new word, a new law, namely, one that is different from that which was given from the cloud and on Sinai. Here a place different from Sinai is designated. (TLSB)

He will lead them to understand and trust the ways in which he makes himself known. He will open up their minds to his saving action. The creative Word of the Lord that birthed the world will give them new and eternal life as he goes forth from Jerusalem. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

God's people long to learn the ways of God, and He teaches them. God gave people His Word and teaches them through the written record of His love in the Scriptures. Luther reminds us, "Christianity is most truly a hearing or pondering of the Word in order that Christ may speak to us at all time" (LW, Volume 16, page 31). (PBC)

We cannot walk in the paths of God's peace unless He teaches us. (LL)

The poor Gentiles, estranged from God, have again found God, their God. However, they desire further instruction in His ways and are willing to walk in His paths, meaning, in the ways that God indicated for man to walk. Willing obedience is also a mark of a true convert. (Stoeckhardt)

The ways of the Lord are His works, especially the works He does in us, namely, that He destroys the works of the devil, sin, death, sadness, fear, trembling, and all evils, then also our daily lapses; and He works the opposite in us: hope, righteousness, patience, joy, peace, etc. These are the ways of the Lord which His Word brings when it is heard and believed. When the Word is missing, we begin to be offended, to judge and accuse others. But when the Word is present, I say: "God has forgiven you your sins. You, too, must likewise forgive that person his sin and

pray for him.” In this way the heart is filled with new thoughts through the Word and is put at rest. Then we walk in the paths of the Lord; for Christ works and rules more and more in us—Christ, who is the Word of God and King over all. Good-bye to all other paths, for they are false. (Luther)

out of Zion shall go the law – Once people hear the gospel, they invite others to learn of God’s grace. This is a natural response to the gospel. When we believe, we want to witness. One need think only about Pentecost. With people from all over the world assembled in Jerusalem, the disciples witnessed and drew others to treasure the promises of God. How the early disciples must have marveled at the fulfillment of Isaiah’s words. (PBC)

Law, that is, proclamation. The prophecy stands that a proclamation shall flow from Jerusalem into all nations. This was done through the apostles.... ‘Their voice has gone out to all the earth’ (Rom. 10:18). By the Word alone, therefore, the church is recognized, and in the glory of the Word the reign of Christ is described. The Word draws the people, makes them willing and joyful. Thus the church is exalted and triumphs against tyrants and heretics even in the midst of tribulation, in order that they may be forced to confess that this is true” (AE 16:31–32). (TLSB)

This is not a physical journey to Israel. The heathen peoples remain where they are living. The Word of God, the news of salvation come to them. And it is the effect of the Word that they in a spiritual way now make a pilgrimage to the house of the God of Jacob, that they turn to the Lord and walk in His ways. (Stoekhardt)

This is what will influence and draw the nations, so that they flow to Christ and learn, namely, the Word. Here there is no armed departure from Jerusalem on the part of the king, no violent clash. Ps. 110:2 says: “The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter.” From this place the scepter of Christ’s kingdom was sent forth through the apostles without force in supreme peace, and the sweetness of this peace takes hold of the nations. But behold here the promise of a new word, a new law, namely, one that is different from that which was given from the cloud and on Sinai. Here a place different from Sinai is designated. *Law*, that is, proclamation. The prophecy stands that a proclamation shall flow from Jerusalem into all nations. This was done through the apostles. Let this be the strength of our faith against the Jews. “Their voice has gone out to all the earth” (Rom. 10:18). By the Word alone, therefore, the church is recognized, and in the glory of the Word the reign of Christ is described. The Word draws the people, makes them willing and joyful. Thus the church is exalted and triumphs against tyrants and heretics even in the midst of tribulation, in order that they may be forced to confess that this is true. (Luther)

2:4 *he shall judge between the nations* – Characteristics of the Messiah (11:3–4). (TLSB)

Since God’s Word has become normative, it will be obeyed and so the Lord Himself shall be the arbiter, should misunderstandings arise. This approach does not necessarily imply misunderstanding will come up, but this is actually an attempt to describe the perfect situation in terms of the customary imperfections with which we are only too familiar. The Word is always the court of last appeals. (Leopold)

Ps. 110:6: “He will execute judgment among the nations”; that is, He will perform the office of a judge, will rule through judgment, namely, through the Word. “He,” says John 16:8, “will convince the world of sin, etc.” This, however, is a description of the kingdom of Christ that is to be extended even among the Gentiles and is not to be confined to the Jews. In like manner, namely, through the Word, He will convict many peoples, that is, everywhere in the world. Although there is but one kingdom, yet it is present in many peoples. But He will convict them so

that they acknowledge that they are sinners and are condemned before God because they do not know God, do not fear Him, and do not believe Him. (Luther)

shall decide disputes – The peace promised is peace with God based on Christ and His forgiveness. It is profound peace that affects what believers do; they live at peace with one another and the world around them. They become peacemakers as Jesus indicated. The gospel again has created a response: peace with God changes human hearts. (PBC)

The peace that fills our hearts changes our lives, and as we change, we also change the society around us. As the Scriptures declare, that change will not be complete here on earth. (LL)

swords into plowshares. The reverse process occurs in Joel 3:10. What is here called a plowshare was actually an iron point mounted on a wooden beam. Ancient plows did not have a plowshare proper. (CSB)

Weapons are unnecessary in this Kingdom. The spiritual benefits available to all nations and the latter day Jerusalem are pictured as the restoration of the bliss of Eden: undisturbed peace, harmony in the animal world, paradisiacal fertility of the earth (11:1-9; 32:15-20; 65:17-25). Turning weapons into agricultural instruments is reversed and Joel 3:10. (TLSB)

Across the street from the United Nations building in New York, in the United Nations Plaza, a stone wall gives this quote from Isaiah. All people desire peace, but in this world of sin, peace is established by a balance of power between equally powerful nations or by the armed force between un-equals. What Isaiah means is so very different. God's people do not "train for war." Isaiah saw a spiritual peace based on God's love in Christ. Only when Christ returns will sinful human being set aside their sinful natures, and then all hostility and conflict will cease. Believers focus on the real peace within and ahead, not on the promises of political peace on earth. (PBC)

We can expect to put up with wars and rumors of war until Jesus comes again to take us to live with Him in the heavenly home. Until Jesus comes, armies will always march across the landscape of our planet. Until Jesus comes, war planes will continue to roar through the earth's skies in anger and retaliation. Until Jesus comes, refugees will continue to wander from country to country. Until Jesus comes, burial squads will keep on filling body bags. Until Jesus comes, boastful dictators will continue to strut across the front pages of the daily news. Even so, the peace Christ offers is no illusion. It's no empty promise. It's not "pie in the sky by and by," as some would have us believe. It's here. It's now. It's a precious gift to each of His subjects from the Prince of Peace Himself. (LL)

This is a figurative and periphrastic way of speaking. It means that they will return to complete harmony and peace, and there is no better way to get rid of disagreements than that which Christ uses. In one statement He declares that at the same time all are condemned and that everything is full of sins before God. For those who hear and believe this, for what will they contend? If my property, wisdom, and righteousness are of no avail before God, why should I fight it out for them? In the world there is continual war. The self-righteous fight with one another for their righteousness. The godly condemn their own righteousness and accept the verdict of condemnation; false Christians are altogether carnal and worldly, and for this reason they are the instigators of factions and disagreements. True Christians are in beautiful agreement, because they hold even everything in contempt for the sake of Christ alone. (Luther)

nation shall not lift up sword against nation – God's action among the nations will result in peace. They will develop a new lifestyle in international as well as interpersonal relationships.

The Lord will become the judge in how they interact. Not by their own barbaric tools of war, but by God's refreshing, forgiving Spirit, through the teaching of the Word of Christ, they will seek reconciliation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

Military training will not be necessary. (TLSB)

2:5 *O house of Jacob* – If even heathen nations respond to the Gospel, how much more should the house of Jacob. Isaiah calls his people to escape the coming judgment by walking in the light of the Word which is preached to them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

The rich promise of God brings a response. When Isaiah considered the promises of God, he encouraged the people of his day to walk in the light of the Lord. (PBC)

God's invitation had gone out. God yearned to draw His people to Himself. He longed to teach them His ways so they could walk in His paths. But most of those called themselves God's people wanted to no part of that. (LL)

When there is this kind of preaching, the Gentiles will be converted and reduced to nothing, so that their own righteousness is not exalted. Then it will be most of all necessary for you Jews first to acknowledge that grace. Paul says in Rom. 3³: "To the Jew first and also to the Greek." For the promise was given above all to the Jews and was first proclaimed among the Jews. Therefore since they are the first people and the chief part of the church, the prophet properly admonishes them to buy while the market is in front of the door. "In a time of favor," he says below in ch. 49:8, and "at the acceptable time" in 2 Cor. 6:2. "Therefore, O house of Jacob, to you above all this promise applies. Give thanks to God, do not disregard the light but 'while you have the light, believe in the light, etc.' (John 12:36), lest the darkness overtake you and you suffer harm." (Luther)

walk in the light – To walk in the light is to know the light, to recognize it, and then to follow the path that it illuminates. The psalmist wrote, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105). By faith in Jesus, we have been included in the house of Jacob – another name for the church, or the assembly of believers. We too are encouraged to use the Word so that it might show us the path and give us power to walk as the Lord directs. (PBC)

Example of God's action motivates ethical action (cf 1Jn 3:2b–3). (TLSB)

2:1–5 The Lord will gather the nations to His Church (the latter day "Zion") through the Word. He calls you to fulfill this prophecy by sharing the Word with your family, friends, and neighbors. The Lord works through that illustrious Word to change your heart and those around you. • May Your light illumine my heart, O Lord, and lead me in the way of peace as I share Your Word with others. Amen. (TLSB)

The Day of the Lord

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

majesty. 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. 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. 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. 18 And the idols shall utterly pass away. 19 And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth. 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, 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. 22 Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?

2:6 *you have rejected your people* – We move so quickly from the heights of God’s promises to the depth of human sin and rebellion. The prophet shocks his readers with the announcement that God has abandoned His people. Why? What has changed the love and peace of the first four verses to the judgment that fills the rest of the chapter? God’s people have rejected the Lord’s promises. (PBC)

Isaiah addresses God. He is justified in withholding His favor from this people chosen to bear His promises (vv 2–4), who are now guilty of sins of the heathen. They trust alliances with foreigners. (TLSB)

מִן־מִקְדָּם, which the old translation explains with “as of old,”⁴ means “arising from before,” so far as time and place are concerned. “The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East” (Gen. 2:8). Hence this expression is used ambiguously here to mean from before, that is, before the ages; in the anterior part of a place, or among earlier people, Easterners, or those who are before them. For to the east the Jews have the Persians, the Arabians, and the Chaldeans; to the west they have Palestine with the Mediterranean Sea. This, then, is the meaning: The Jews are more superstitious than the Orientals or the Occidentals, because they are situated between them and know the superstitions of both. They are full of superstitions, more so than the Orient. (Luther)

East. Probably means Aram (Syria) and Mesopotamia. (CSB)

Pagan customs learned from Gentiles in Arabia and along the Euphrates River. (TLSB)

Israel has let things that are ranked high in the East fill the land, in the East where Assyria was the fast-rising power; and nothing lends glamour to values, like the success which the Assyrians were having. (Leupold)

fortune-tellers like the Philistines. See 1Sa 6:2; see also Dt 18:10–11 for a description of such practices. (CSB)

Example of pagan customs; condemned in Lv 19:26. (TLSB)

Philistines. Pagan customs were also found closer to home. Cf 1Sm 6:2. (TLSB)

There were also importations from the West, “soothsayers” like the Philistines. There had been a clash with the Philistines in Uzziah’s day (2 Chron 26:6). But as so often in history, the ones conquered vanquished their conquerors. That soothsaying was something distinctively Philistine is indicated by 1 Sam 6:2 and 2 Kings 1:2. That such devices for ascertaining the future were of only too dubious a value was obvious to more observing persons. But Israel dropped to this lower level. (Leupold)

strike hands. Either ecstatic pagan worship, or similar to our handshake, sealing an agreement. (TLSB)

2:7-8 Gentile culture, exerting a bad influence on Judah. Horses and chariots were regarded as excesses. (TLSB)

2:7 *silver and gold ... horses*. Accumulating large quantities of these was forbidden to the king (Dt 17:16–17). They usually led to a failure to trust in God (see 31:1). (CSB)

Several more illustrations prove how far away from God these people had moved. When Isaiah began his ministry, the people of Judah were generally wealthy. Kings Uzziah and Jotham had returned Judah to the glory days of David and Solomon. They extended the borders of Judah, and the people enjoyed prosperity. But with such prosperity came religious and moral decay. The land was full of silver and gold, and the people trusted in their wealth rather than in the promises of God. Horses represented military power. These people had so many battle chariots that Isaiah chides, “there is no end to their chariots. They had come to trust in human power, not in God. (PBC)

2:8 *land is filled with idols* – Worse than the distractions mentioned in verse 7 was their idolatry. They turned away from the God who had sustained them for centuries in the past and promised so much in the future. They adopted gods they themselves made. How perverse these people were. How frightening the depth of human sin. (PBC)

Isaiah is building up to a climax. The worst of the spurious values are the idols. They, too, are in evidence in great abundance. By a unique turn given to a grammatical form the prophet makes it appear that each man had an idol of his own. So utterly widespread idolatry had become in the face of the urgent warning of Moses and the prophets. With a mild touch of irony these idols are described as “that which his own fingers [small and weak thing they are] have made.” (Leupold)

Idols are called “‘eliylyim,” nothingness, because they are non-things. (Stoekhardt)

He describes their stubbornness. There is always an abundance of ungodly teachers and of those who lead people away from sound doctrine, namely, belly worshipers (Phil. 3:19); and throughout Scripture they are charged with being greedy. Hence He describes not only the prophets who have been alienated from sound doctrine but also those who are addicted to lusts and riches. For whoever is turned away from the Holy Spirit does not seek the things that are above (Col. 3:1). Therefore he has a taste for nothing but earthly things (cf. Matt. 16:23), and they take pains to scrape gold and silver together. What does the pope do? His greed is insatiable. A greedy man lacks what he has as much as what he does not have. He is always a beggar; in spite of all his immense treasures he complains about the loss of an obol. Moreover, there has to be protection for the treasures if they are to be kept. “To protect what has been acquired is no less a virtue than to acquire it.” Therefore they provide many horsemen, set forth their opinions frantically and insatiably, scrape money together, condemn those who speak against them, etc. And this is what the prophet means, namely, their zeal and greed. (Luther)

they bow down to the work of their hands – We do not read that the Jews had idols, especially after the return from Babylon, but rather that they waged many wars with the Romans because of images. Therefore the prophet is speaking of his own time or also concerning their various forms of worship, later in groves, on mountains, etc. Then at the time of Christ they were also divided into various kinds of worship, as Matt. 23:20 says, “He who swears by the altar,” also Matt. 5:34 ff. An ungodly man shapes his own god, does not have a true knowledge of God, and contrary to the will of God, invents a religion to suit his own opinion. What a person fears, loves, worships, trusts—this is his god. Our God has no regard for our works, but only for the race and for His glory in us. Therefore every ungodly man bows down to the work of his own hands. And the heretics have their own idea, which they themselves have fashioned, and a fictitious Christ. It is not man’s business to determine what pleases God; it is the business of God alone. (Luther)

2:9 humbled...brought low – Unbelief is always arrogance. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). All who seek a different way into God’s family assert they know better than the Lord Himself. The consequences of such unbelief and pride is God’s judgment. (PBC)

Bowing to idols does not bring people favor; it only lowers them. (TLSB)

They had no need for the Lord. They had no need to learn His ways. They were secure. Secure in their sins. It’s a dangerous place to be. A most dangerous place to be. (LL)

Adam, אָדָם, that is, man, both common and noble. For Adam means the common man; אֲדָמָה means the nobleman, the prince, as Ps. 49:2 indicates, all who are born of the earth, common people and princes. Therefore the common people bow down, and the princes are seen in procession; that is, the whole people is given over to idolatry, the bigwigs and the underdogs, etc. Their sin is unforgivable; it is a sin against the Holy Spirit. They seek forgiveness of sins. An acknowledged sin is forgivable. A defended sin is unforgivable. For he who forgives this sin would be in agreement with it and would approve of it. But God does not approve of iniquity. “Evil may not sojourn with Thee, etc.,” as Ps. 5:4 says. Thus Moses prayed against Korah (Num. 16), and 1 John 5:16 says: “There is sin which is mortal.” Nevertheless, let us pray that he may be freed from sin and from his way of life, that is, that he may acknowledge his sin; for then it becomes forgivable. Paul says in Rom. 7:18: “I know that nothing good dwells within me.” But this evil is forgivable, since I acknowledge and confess it. (Luther)

do not forgive them – The last, final judgment is meant, the final wrath that excludes all grace and forgiveness. When God judges on the last day, He will speak in anger; He assuredly will no longer forgive. (Stoeckhardt)

Not a call to withhold God’s true forgiveness, but a plea that idolatry, too significant to ignore, be decisively ended. (TLSB)

CSB special note says “not raise them up.

2:10, 19, 21 These verses form a refrain that builds to a climax in v. 21. Lines 3–4 of each verse are identical. (CSB)

Before God’s judgments, the mightiest nations are weak as a little child. Upon the high in power and place, who have been leaders in rebellion against God, they fall with irresistible fore and grind them to powder. (CB)

2:10 *rocks ... dust.* During times of severe oppression the Israelites took refuge in caves and holes in the ground (see Jdg 6:1–2; 1Sa 13:6). (CSB)

Self-sufficiency vanishes as sinners vainly seek refuge from “the terror of the LORD” (vv 19, 21). (TLSB)

In a land that abounded in caves of every description, it had become traditional among other things in days of disaster, especially when the enemy overran the land, to seek a hiding place in such caves (Judges 6:2; 1 Samuel 12:6; 14:11). In the present instance the Lord Himself or the terror of His coming induces, is the danger from which the prophet bids men to flee (Luke 23:30). The Lord’s coming will impress some as being sheer “terror.” Others will see a manifestation of the “glory of His majesty.” In any case they will look upon the Lord from the angle of their faith or lack of faith in Christ. (Stoeckhardt)

This is the rich language of the transported prophet, who is eloquent and has at his disposal an abundance of figures of words and thoughts. This is the joy of the Spirit, which makes his eloquence more pleasing and richer. With this eloquence the prophet exults as he sees that Christ’s kingdom is higher than all other kingdoms, and as he sees its success. Ardent he pours out the joy of his heart, so that he seems to be singing rather than speaking. This is what he is saying: “There are many gods and lords on earth, as 1 Cor. 8:5 says, many religions and domains. It is for everyone to want his own, etc.; but for us there is only one God and Lord, who by His reign makes the whole world one, not because He will bring everyone into His kingdom, but He distributes His one kingdom throughout the world, namely, a kingdom of the same Spirit and the same people.” A great miracle. For this has happened to no monk, to no other region. But by apostrophe the prophet is addressing the whole world, which he embraces with the singular number. It is as if he were saying: “Be gone with all your glory, wisdom, and power, which amount to nothing. There will arise glory, power, majesty, and the kind of kingdom from which the greatest kings and the most powerful princes shrink in fear. Therefore hide yourselves, together with all your glory, in a rock and in a cave.” But he does not say this to frighten us, whom he invited above, away from Christ, but in comparison with that majesty he pours contempt on all religions and kingdoms. (Luther)

The words contain a prophecy of impending judgment. (CB)

Jeremiah 23:24, “Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD.”

terror of the Lord - So greatly, he says, will that glorious king have to be feared and revered that you will hide in a cave and not be able to stand anywhere. This takes place when sin has been proclaimed to the ungodly, and the Gospel to the godly. Of such great splendor is His glory and grandeur that what you have is filthy and worthy of being hidden. This is how the Holy Spirit and faith speak, for they are concealed here. For kings rule, and Christ seems to be dead. Christians are oppressed and killed. That whole majesty is in the Word and in faith. He who has the Holy Spirit sees that all things are under the feet of Christ. (Luther)

majesty. The Hebrew for this word is translated “pride” when used of man. Pride is an attempt by man to be his own god (see 14:13–14). (CSB)

Glory of the living God, contrasted with dead idols that have no power. (TLSB)

2:11, 17, 20 *in that day*. The phrase occurs seven times in chs. 2–4 (see 3:7, 18; 4:1–2). The day of the Lord (see also v. 12) is a time of judgment and/or blessing as God intervenes decisively in the affairs of the nations (see Zep 1:14–2:3). Assyria and Babylon would bring the terror of judgment upon Judah in Isaiah’s day (5:30). (CSB)

Everything that stands tall on human pride will be cut off at the knees. Everything accomplished in human strength will be demolished. All the armaments. All the commerce. All the tapestries and cosmetics and home furnishings and electronic gadgets that human beings lust after and court an pursue and chase down and live for – all these things will be so much dust when the Lord of hosts shakes the earth. (LL)

Philippians 2:10-11, “¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Psalms 110:1 & Matthew 22:44, “The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

2:11 *haughty looks of man* – The prophet indicates that all “haughty looks,” which result from an attitude of pride will be “brought low,” that is, will be turned into the very opposite of what they now are and the very pride of man itself shall be cancelled out. (Leupold)

Proud, arrogant evildoers will then writhe as in dust, howl and tremble. Pride is attributed to the eyes because it is the peculiar look in man’s eyes that is the tell tale. (Stoekhardt)

He explains himself. Whatever is exalted in the eyes of men is cast down; it will be nothing in comparison with the loftiness of Christ, and everything will become worthless. Therefore in brief words he teaches contempt of the world together with all its splendor. In comparison with Christ, these things are worthy of being hidden in the dust. Luke 16:15 says: “What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God”; and Luke 18:14: “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled.” Therefore by His example and strength Christ humbles whatever is lofty. It behooves all kings to stand in awe if they see the King of kings humbled in this way. No godly king wears a crown in the sight of God. He is not righteous before God. When the glory of Christ is present, he casts off every desirable thing. “If we have food and clothing, etc.” (1 Tim. 6:8). But the world is not satisfied with these things but seeks splendor and glory beyond them. Christ says (Luke 12:29): “Do not be of anxious mind.” (Luther)

Lord alone will be exalted – The Lord, He alone, is exalted and holds the field on that day when all creation will be undone before Him. (Stoekhardt)

Namely, through the Word and faith; for it will be proclaimed that in Christ the slightest suffering and the most worthless thing will be nobler than all the crowns of all the kings. (Luther)

2:12 Judah will not escape punishment by insisting that God preserve His chosen people regardless of their behavior (cf Am 5:18–20; Mt 3:7–10; 23:33). God’s presence humbles all human efforts. (TLSB)

Lord of hosts has a day – That men’s arrogance should be humbled is evident from this, that the future day of the Lord of Hosts will bring low all loftiness on earth. The prophets of the Old Covenant have already prophesied concerning the “day of the Lord,” concerning the day of wrath and judgment, which will bring to a close the time of this world and its existence. This

verse contains a grandiose portrayal of the judgment and this judgment is painted here stretches over all the earth. Details of the general thought in verse 12 are then given in the succeeding verses. (Stoeckhardt)

Isaiah's description foreshadows the universal and final judgment to come when "heaven and earth pass away" (Mt 5:18). This day of wrath is described more fully in chs 24 and 34. (TLSB)

With true power of another kind the Lord will observe a provincial day and hold an assembly, that is, the day of the New Testament, on which the day of the Last judgment also begins. Then souls will be justified. In the spirit we are righteous, but sins still cling to the flesh. "Although your bodies are dead, etc.," Rom. 8:10 says. It is the day on which it is made manifest that He alone reigns over every proud thing, etc., over all things. This should all be read in the neuter gender. Whether it is wisdom or righteousness or power, there is no majesty in comparison with the majesty of Christ. (Lu)

2:13 *cedars of Lebanon*. Even inanimate things that people stand in awe of will be humbled so that "the LORD alone will be exalted" (v. 11). (CSB)

The tall, straight cedar tree remains a symbol of Lebanon to this day. (TLSB)

The cedars of Lebanon often suffered ravages when invading armies hew them down for military purposes. (Leupold)

The figure is clear. Because of Lebanon, which has tall cedars, the prophets frequently use it to describe the striking splendors of the kingdom. The mountains represent kingdoms and principalities. The cedars are the princes of the kingdom, the magistrates, the governors, one higher than the other. Lebanon is toward the north; Bashan is toward the east, in the tribe of Manasseh. (Luther)

oaks of Bashan. Used here as a parallel to Lebanon, Bashan lay east of the Jordan and extended northward to Mount Hermon. Oaks are strong trees; hence, they were symbols of a nation's strength. (TLSB)

Bashan. A region east of the Jordan River and north of Gilead. It was famous for its oaks (Eze 27:6) and its animals (Eze 39:18). (CSB)

2:14 *lofty mountains* – The mountains upon which the trees mentioned in verse 13 stood are thought of here. These had been the scene of fortifications by Amaziah (2 Chron 26:10) and of heathen abominations by Ahaz (2 Chron 27:4). (Leupold)

Creation has been abused and perverted by human sin. Sadly, nature is tied to man and his sin. The trees and mountains are beautiful illustrations of God's power and majesty (Romans 1:2), but humanity has failed to see the God behind the wonders of creation. Instead, they attempted to fill the spiritual void with the beauty of nature. But only God can fill the spiritual chasm within the human heart. Because men have worshiped the creations and not the Creator, the creations will also be judged. (PBC)

2:15 *high tower* – "Homah betsursh," actually: truncated, insurmountable wall; it is almost like a precipitous, steep wall. (Stoeckhardt)

Many a fortress and watchtower seem to have dotted the landscape as fine defensive measures, in which, however, the nation had put its trust in it rather than in the living God. Consequently fortified walls would soon be found far from impregnable. (Leupold)

In Isaiah's day King Uzziah built towers for protection (2 Chron. 26:9, 10). His son Jotham continued the building of towers (2 Chron 27:3, 4). Although both kings are listed among the good kings of Judah, their fortifications weaned people from trusting in the Lord. (PBC)

2:16 *ships of Tarshish*. Were large vessels such as those used by Solomon (1Ki 10:22) and the Phoenicians (Isa 23:1, 14) to ply the sea in far-flung commercial ventures. (CSB)

Symbolic of human strength and accomplishment. (TLSB)

Jewish trade ships brought necessities and luxuries to Judah. This too turned people away from the Lord. Materialism has always had the same result; the more people have the less they think about the Lord and His promises. Of course, there were wealthy believers and always will be. Yet Jesus also warns about riches and tells us how difficult it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Mark 10:25). (PBC)

2:17 *haughtiness of man...brought low* – Men of earth put their trust in the creature. They show off and flaunt the good things and treasures of earth. They boast of the works of their own hands. This pride, this arrogance of men will come to naught when all that whereof they are proud and boast is destroyed. (Stoekhardt)

2:18 *idols shall utterly pass away* – These non-things on which men have set their hearts and to this belong all creatures, all the good things of earth, their own handiworks whereof they boast, disappear completely on that day. (Stoekhardt)

In Hebrew: The idols shall be completely changed. "The heavens will perish, but Thou dost endure," as Ps. 102:26 says. And the same King is here. Not only will that which is lofty in matters of the state, with which he has dealt up to this point, be brought down, but also what is high in the spiritual administration. For the world is divided into these two things even among the Gentiles. For no nation has not had gods. In sum, every form of worship, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, is dung in comparison with the worship of Christ. Therefore all those forms of worship will be changed and overthrown. Moreover, the idol denotes the culture, the religion, the ultimate witness, what men think and have in mind, etc. And now the idols are changed, that is, monks into laymen, etc., through the Gospel. Even so these spiritual people, will together with their worship, hide themselves in caves; that is, they will confess that everything of theirs, both their righteousness and their religion, are nothing in comparison with the glory of Christ. (Luther)

2:19 *shall the caves of the rocks* – Forsaken of their idols, of the things that they loved, they go and hide themselves in the caves of the rocks, in the crevices of the earth, in order to escape the terror of divine majesty. However they will never be able to elude the Lord, who strikes with terror the entire earth. (Stoekhardt)

When God moves to fulfill His promised judgment. (TLSB)

2:20-22 In that day, the day of the Lord, silver and gold will mean nothing. The wicked will throw their idols over their shoulders in a mad dash to find an empty cave in which to hide from the terror of the Lord as He pours out His wrath on the ungodly. (LL)

2:20 The futility of worshiping idols is repeatedly noted by Isaiah (see, e.g., 30:22; 31:7; 40:19–20; 44:9–20). See also note on 40:18–20. (CSB)

Seeing the true God, they reject their false idols, but it is too late. (TLSB)

On that day the idols will completely disappear. What was dear and precious to man will be taken from him. It will disintegrate before his very eyes. But man himself will fling away his idols of silver and gold, the idols he once worshiped, to the moles and to the bats, into the filthiest of corners, in order after flinging away his useless, accursed burden to seek refuge for himself. It is better to read “hapharepparoth” and to understand this word of animals that dig into the earth, of moles possibly. Man abhor, curse, and damn his idols which desert him, which only yield him wrath. Nevertheless, this is futile remorse, a sham and a remorse of despair that does no good. It did not help Judas to throw away the thirty pieces of silver. (Stoekhardt)

2:21 *enter the caverns of the rocks* – The object of the casting away of the idol was make entrance into the rock caverns and clefts possible. Any dark and difficult place will be preferable to encountering the Lord. The thoughts of vv. 10 and 19 are freely reworked in this verse to build up an impressive refrain. (Leupold)

Like Adam in Eden (Gn 3:8), fools vainly try to hide from God. (TLSB)

2:22 *Stop regarding man*. Lit. “Cease from man” or “Give up on man.” The term describes the rejection of the Messiah in 53:3. Ironically, the one Man who should have been trusted and “esteemed” (equals “of what account” here) was “rejected,” “given up on” by men. He alone was worthy of the esteem wrongly given to frail leaders. (CSB)

This exhortation to repentance forms the conclusion to the portrayal of the judgment. Before the prophet dealt at length with how men with their pride, with the idols, will be brought to naught in the judgment. Thus he admonishes all who hear him to break off all association with the vain men of this world, with mortal men, to give up fear of man, love of man, trust in man. “Lakhem” is *datives commode*. Each should for his own sake, in order to escape future wrath and judgment, part company and dissociate himself from the degenerates of the human race. An ancient interpretation understand “man” to mean one who is “to be highly regarded,” Christ, the Son of Man, and understands the prophet’s admonition to say that the Jewish people simply ought to have nothing to do with this man, Christ. The text requires us to think of the nothingness and worthlessness of the man, and the context rules out any connection to Christ and points simply to the judgment that is destined for man, for the God-forgetting human race. (Stoekhardt)

breath. Fools trust mortal man instead of God. God gives mankind life (cf Gn 2:7), and it soon passes from sinners. (TLSB)

This is an exclamation. For seeing that at the coming of Christ everything will be thus subjected, trodden underfoot, and will become an abomination and He alone will be the true King and Priest, for this reason do not undertake anything in opposition to Him. Many will certainly try to drive Him out together with those who are His, that is, out of the world, and say (Luke 19:14): “We do not want this King to rule over us.” But “Turn away,” he says, “stand apart from Him. Beware. There is breath in His nostrils.” This means that He can be angry, and powerfully angry at that. And “His wrath is quickly kindled,” as Ps. 2:11 says. Thus by threatening He wants to frighten away all who strive against Him. Luke says in Acts 9:1 that “Saul, still breathing threats and murder,” was going along like a horse or some other beast revealing wrath with its nostrils. נַחַשׁ denotes both nostrils and wrath. The word “high” is not in the Hebrew, but it has “of what

account is he?” as if to say: “He is so exalted that no one can understand.” This he says against the ungodly majesties who persecute Him, regard Him as a heretic, without knowing how great He is and how great His wrath is. The chief point of this chapter is that Christ will reign through the Gospel over everything lofty on earth, whether external or internal, whether secular or spiritual. All these things will have to yield and be subject to Him, with the result that He alone will remain Lord, King, and Priest forever. Amen. (Luther)

2:6–22 The Lord describes His wrath against idolatry. Like Judah, many lands today are filled with idols (wealth, power, beauty, and fascination with new religions). These cannot compare to the true God, who is powerful to judge and to save as He will when Christ returns. • Return, O Lord, and deliver us from our self-destructive ways. Grant us satisfaction in Your goodness. Amen. (TLSB)