

Isaiah 2 Handout

Isaiah 2 follows the rebuke of Judah in chapter 1, but now offers a beautiful vision of the future. It shows the contrast of what God's kingdom will one day look like; a promised future of peace versus the present corruption of the people. There is also a call to trust in God rather than human strength.

Verses 1-2

We get a time reference in verse two. **What is it?** _____

This is referring to the future when Jesus returns and will establish His rule in fullness over the earth.

What is going to be established? _____

This is referring to Mt Zion in Jerusalem where the temple was located.

- Highest of the mountains
- Exalted above the hills
- All nations will stream to it

So, what exactly does this mean? There are, of course, different interpretations.

Some interpret this *literally*, meaning that a physical temple will be established during the millennium as a focal point of worship and government and that the temple will be physically raised above other mountains.

Others interpret this *symbolically*. They see the "mountain of the Lord's temple" as representing the spiritual supremacy of God and His worship, emphasizing God's exaltation and the universal recognition of His lordship rather than a physical elevation in land. God's dwelling will be exalted above all other centers of worship and power. The streaming of the people shows the drawing power of God as the nations flow uphill (against nature). People from every nation on earth will be moved to follow Him. This anticipates the inclusion of the Gentiles as part of God's plan - all people will seek Him, not just Israel.

Ephesians 2:19-22

*"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **21** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."*

A last interpretation is a combination of the two. This is the belief in a *dual fulfillment*, acknowledging both the spiritual exaltation of God's temple through the spread of the Gospel and the possible transformation of the earth.

What does the vision of the Mountain of the Lord and the nations coming to learn from God reveal about God's ultimate plan for humanity?

The main thing we need to get from these verses is that God will be exalted in the world.

We are in the final stage of God's redemptive plan for mankind. The heart of that plan is the salvation of sinners from every tribe, nation, and tongue on the earth. Isaiah sees this as a miraculous streaming of people, whether to the mountain itself or to God.

Verses 3-4

What will God teach according to verse 3? _____

It goes on to say that the law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Isaiah pictures the nations streaming to God to learn His ways. How does this contrast with Judah's spiritual condition at the time?

What does it say God will do in verse 4? _____

The Hebrew word for 'judge' is shaphat which is different from our modern concept of the word. Here it has a judicial sense. It refers to the activity of a third party who sits over two parties at odds with one another. This third party hears both sides and decides what is to be done. So it seems that there will be a future time when God will resolve conflicts among the nations which will result in a time of peace and justice. The ultimate result of God's laws is peace among the people.

It is a time where weapons of war will be repurposed into tools for agriculture. This seems to be symbolizing the end of conflict and the beginning of a peaceful era.

However all of this happens and what it actually looks like, we don't know. What we do know is that these verses give us a vision of God's universal reign in the future. We know that God will establish His kingdom, however that may look in such a way that all the nations are drawn to Him. His truth will flow bringing teaching, justice and peace. That's what we need to hold onto and focus on.

Verse 5

After describing this amazing picture of a glorious future when the nations will stream to God, Isaiah now turns to his own people. Descendants of Jacob is another name for Israel.

In light of this amazing picture that Isaiah paints, what does he say here?

'Walk' in the Bible often means to live our daily life in obedience and fellowship with God.

'Light' is seen as God's truth, presence, revelation and guidance.

Isaiah both invites and challenges them in this verse. If the nations are going to one day seek the Lord, shouldn't God's own people be doing that now? They should be walking with the Lord right now in the present and living their lives in God's truth and ways in light of the glorious future to come.

Isaiah describes a future glory in verses 2-4. Next, he calls them to align their lives to that vision in verse 5. Now, Isaiah is going to give a warning about a coming judgment (vs. 6-22).

Verses 6-9

What does verse 6 say that God has done? _____

This isn't saying that God has permanently abandoned them, but that His favor and protection are no longer on them because of their unfaithfulness. They have embraced foreign spiritual practices. Instead of walking in the light of the Lord talked about in verse 5, they are embracing the darkness from the nations around them.

They have become spiritually corrupt. We see Judah's problem in these verses: self-sufficiency. They have chosen to allow the false gods of other nations to capture their attention, and to trust in their riches and material gains rather than in God.

- Full of superstitions from the East
- Practice divination - like Philistines
- Embrace pagan customs
- Land full of silver and gold
- No end to their treasures
- Land full of horses; no end to their chariots
 - Deuteronomy 17:16-17 says, *"The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, "You are not to go back that way again." 17 He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold."*
- Land is full of idols
- Bow down to the works of their hands

Judah had accumulated all the things to feel secure, but they were trusting in what they had made themselves or acquired rather than trusting in the Lord their God.

According to verse 9, what will happen? _____

Trusting and glorifying created things rather than the Creator will result in humiliation.

How is God's humbling of pride actually an act of mercy?

Verse 9 ends with 'do not forgive them'. This statement is more about the severity of Judah's sin and the need for it to be dealt with than a direct command for God to withhold forgiveness. This is a plea for God to not overlook their sins.

How does pride lead people away from reliance on the Lord, both in Isaiah's day and ours?

The rest of the chapter is a prophetic picture of what is going to happen one day in the future when the Lord returns.

Verses 10-21

(Verses 10)

What are the people going to do? _____

They will hide from the fearful presence of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty.

(Verse 11-17)

What will happen to the people? _____

God will reveal His majesty and He alone will be exalted.

Verse 12 indicates that there will be a specific time in the future where God will act decisively against the proud and lofty.

Isaiah describes several things that are symbols of human greatness and compete to exalt themselves against the glory of God -

Naturally lofty things:

- Tall trees - Cedars of Lebanon/Oaks of Bashan
- Towering mountains
- All the high hills

Manmade lofty things:

- Lofty towers and fortified walls (military pride)
- Trading ships (commerce)
- Stately vessels (pleasure vehicles)

Once again, their pride will be brought low and humbled.

Who alone will be exalted that day? _____

Anything that exalts itself above God will be brought low and humbled.

(Verses 18-20)

What will totally disappear? _____

They will be exposed as being worthless, whether that be carved images or misplaced trust. It will vanish in the presence of God.

People will flee to caves in rocks and holes in the ground. Again, they are fleeing from the fearful presence of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty.

What is He going to do? _____

The people will throw their idols to moles and bats. We get this image of the worthlessness and ultimate rejection of all the man-made idols and gods when the Lord appears.

(Verses 21)

They again will flee to caverns in the rocks and overhanging crags as they try to escape the fearful presence of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty when He arises to shake the earth.

Verses 10-21 gives us a vivid picture of the Day of the Lord when God's full glory will be revealed and human pride will be brought low.

(Verse 22)

What are they told to do in the last verse? _____

Isaiah calls them to stop trusting in man whose life comes from God. In God alone they should put their trust.

How should the certainty of God's final judgment shape how we live today?

The biggest competitor to the glory of God is human pride. God will one day pull all the high ambitions of humanity down so He alone will be exalted. God's glory will overshadow all human pride. God will allow no rivals.

When it comes to application, we need to look to two verses in this chapter: verses 5 and 22.

Verse 5: *"Come, house of Jacob, and let's walk in the light of the LORD."*

What does it mean to you to walk in the light of the Lord?

Verse 22: “*Stop trusting in mere humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils. Why hold them in esteem?*”

How are we ‘trusting in mere humans’ today? What might that look like?

Application

1. **Seek God's Ways (v.3)**: Am I eager to learn and live by God's Word?
2. **Pursue Peace (v.4)**: Do I help bring peace to my relationships and community?
3. **Exalt God, Not Self (v.11)**: Am I putting God's glory above personal pride?

Where do you see the tension between judgment (vv.10–21) and hope (vv.1–5) in this chapter? How do these together give us a fuller picture of God’s character?

What does it mean to be truly humble before God, and how can we cultivate humility in our lives?

Beyond physical objects, what forms can ‘idols’ take in modern society, and how can we guard ourselves against them?

Prayer:

"Lord, exalt Yourself in my life. Help me to walk in Your light and turn away from anything that takes Your place. Teach me to trust in You alone."