

Isaiah 2-4, Judgment and Restoration in the Day of the Lord

Overview

This section is chiasmic, with predictions of Zion's future eminence surrounding descriptions of the people's sin and the resulting judgment. As in 1:21-27, the Lord's punishment is intended to purge the nation so that it can achieve its intended purpose.

Each description of judgment is introduced with a command (2:5, 22), how the people should respond to this warning and revelation.

Thus we see the same major themes as in ch. 1, themes that will pervade the book:

1. Sin: the nation has violated God's word. 2:6-21; 3:1-4:1
2. Punishment: God's wrath will come upon them for their sin. 2:6-21; 3:1-4:1
3. Command: the Lord expects the people to respond to this revelation by changing their behavior. 2:5, 22.
4. Promise: the Lord promises to restore them to fellowship and blessing. 2:2-4; 4:2-6.

Incidentally, the use of poetic parallelism, already evident in ch. 1, is here pervasive, and often provides an important clue for interpretation. Virtually every clause, every assertion is doubled. The importance of this stylistic feature was recognized by Bishop Lowth in 1754, well after the publication of the KJV in 1611, so sometimes they miss the parallelism.

2:1, Heading

2:1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.--This introductory formula marks the beginning of a new oracle. It seems unusual to us to “see” a “word.” We might expect him to see a vision or hear a word. But Hebrew *dabar* can mean “matter” or “thing” as well, and that appears to be the sense here.

2:2-4, Future Preeminence of Zion

He begins where he will end (4:2-6), with a promise of the glorious future that awaits the nation. These verses also appear in Mic 4:1-3. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah (cf. Isa 1:1 with Mic 1:1), but Isaiah's work appears to have begun a little earlier, during the reign of Uzziah. Where did they come from?

- They might be original with Isaiah, but the grammar of v. 2 would be awkward in this case.
- Micah uttered other words in the context of these during the reign of Hezekiah (cf. Jer 26:18 with Mic 3:12), so they may be original with him.
- See K&D for a discussion of the duplication, and a suggestion that the words may have

Isaiah 2-4

originated with Joel.

2 And it shall come to pass—The verb form is a converted perfect, which (according to K&D) never appears anywhere else at the start of a prophecy. It requires a preceding imperfect to set the temporal frame. This discontinuity suggests that Isaiah is borrowing the following oracle from another source.

in the last days,--There is extensive discussion over this phrase. Some (Calvin; Gill; Young, citing the Rabbis) hold that it is always eschatological (that is, dealing with the day of the Lord, the return of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom). Others (Buchanan) argue that it is a generic description of what is future from the standpoint of the speaker. Harris (cf. Payne) attempts a mixed interpretation, and notes that the singular, “the last day,” *is* consistently eschatological. All eschatology is future, though not all future is eschatological (Harris), and it would be appropriate to use a generic future reference to describe eschatology.

It would seem wisest to decide the eschatological nature of a passage based on what it discusses, not this phrase. To this end, it might be preferable to translate it throughout the OT as “the latter days” (though the LXX renders it by “last days,” and this expression pops up in the NT).

Here, the context shows that we are concerned with eschatological events. We know this, not because of the phrase “in the last [latter] days,” but because of the events that are described. This is one of many promises of Israel's future that we will find throughout the book, promises that form the foundation of our belief in a future millennium.

that the mountain of the LORD'S house—That is, Mount Zion. In its current situation, Mount Zion is actually lower than the nearby Mount of Olives; one looks down on Mount Zion from the top of the Mount of Olives. This picture, from <http://www.holylandphotos.org/browse.asp?s=1,2,6,19,93&img=IJOTCD01> , clearly shows this situation; the dome at the left center is the Dome of the Rock, on the same platform where Solomon's Temple stood. The narrow finger of land extending toward the viewer is biblical Mount Zion.



Ps 125:2 reflects this situation,

Isaiah 2-4

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills;--Isaiah may be describing a physical change in topography; earthquakes feature prominently in the culminations of each cycle in the Revelation. Zech 14 describes dramatic topographical changes in the coming "day of the Lord" (14:1),

3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and **the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof** toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

10 All the land shall be **turned as a plain** from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and **it [Jerusalem] shall be lifted up**, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

But any physical changes are not as important as the relative stature and importance of Mount Zion.

In the mythology of the ANE, the gods live on a mystical mountain. Places of worship were regularly situated in the "high places" so commonly condemned throughout the Bible. The people of Babylon lived in a flood plain where there were no mountains available, so they build a mud-brick temple tower, E-Temen-Anki, "house of heaven and earth." So common was this concept that even the Greeks adopted it in their notion of Mount Olympus.

In fact, mountains figure prominently in God's dealings with his people. He made the covenant of Sinai with them from the top of a mountain (Exod 19-20), and Ps 48:12-2 chiastically links the city and the holy mountain,

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. 2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

Isaiah's prophecy is not just about topography, but about theology. The mountain of Israel's God will be exalted above the homes of all the other deities. Thus Ps 68 describes the exaltation of Zion:

15 The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan. 16 Why leap ye [look ye with envy], ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever.

and all nations shall flow unto it.--As a consequence, the nations will shift their allegiance from false gods to YHWH, and come to worship at his sanctuary. The same promise is seen in Zech 14:16,

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Once again, Ps 68 echoes the same vision:

Isaiah 2-4

29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. 30 Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war. 31 Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. 32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah:

3 And many people shall go and say,--Better, "many peoples," in parallel with "all nations" in the previous clause. In Hebrew, "nation" is a society viewed as a political unit, while "people" is a society viewed as a cultural identity. The two are often used in poetic parallelism as here, and both are plural. Isaiah anticipates a day when not Israel alone, but all nations, will worship the Lord. Three points need to be understood about this prediction.

1. It is not a new concept. Deut 20:10-16 anticipates that Israel would subdue "cities which are very far off from thee," that they would spread the knowledge of the Lord throughout the ancient world by force of arms. But Israel failed in this responsibility, so now the Lord promises that he will arrange history to draw the nations in.
2. It was not fulfilled in Israel's heyday under Solomon, for Isaiah writes 200 years after Solomon and views this as still future.
3. It is not the same as what happens in the church. Eph 3:5, 6 points out that our status as fellowheirs with Israel, rather than subject nations, "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men."

It was prophesied that Gentiles would come to worship the Lord. It was not previously revealed that in their worship, they would be on an equal footing with Jews.

This passage, and others like it, anticipate a day when God's kingdom has come on earth as it is in heaven. In that day, Israel will be the center of the earth, and the Messiah will rule as king over her and over all the earth.

Come ye, and let us go up—Note how the people encourage one another. Calvin:

the godly will be filled with such an ardent desire to spread the doctrines of religion ... every one ... will desire to draw others along with him. ... The greater the eminence above others which any man has received from his calling, so much the more diligently ought he to labor to enlighten others. This points out to us also the ordinary method of collecting a Church, which is, by the outward voice of men;

Following the Lord is not something that we do in isolation from one another, but something in which we need the encouragement of other believers.

to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob;--In spite of their diverse origins, they will all come to the Lord's sanctuary, upon the newly exalted mount of Zion.

The next two clauses express the purpose for their journey to Zion, the objective with which they encourage one another along the way. They express two important insights concerning our relation to the Lord.

and he will teach us of his ways,--Note the "of," indicating source. "His ways" are viewed as a rich, inexhaustible storehouse (Rom 11:33) from which he will continually bring forth instruction. The same

Isaiah 2-4

idea is expressed in Ps 94:12,

Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him **out of thy law**.

Compare the New Testament insight that “in him [the Lord Jesus] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Col 2:3. Knowing God is not something that is done in a moment. It is the project of a lifetime. We are to “grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” 2 Pet 3:18. This is the first insight: that knowing God is an ongoing *process*.

and we will walk in his paths:--The second insight is that knowing God is *practical*. Our response to it is not just belief, but obedience. (The cohortative mood of this verb, following the imperative earlier in the verse, suggests that this clause and the previous one are to be understood as purpose clauses, Waltke-O'Conner 35.4.2b.)

for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.--The quotation from the Gentile pilgrims is over, and Isaiah resumes his commentary. Just as Zion's exaltation (v. 2) motivated the pilgrims' desire to go to it, so their quest for the Lord's teaching reflects Zion as its source.

Note how Zion has now replaced Sinai as the source of revelation. “The law” *torah* can refer to teaching generally, not just the commandments of Moses. The change in source suggests a change in content as well. Isaiah is looking beyond the covenant of Sinai to the New Covenant. Ps 68 also compares Zion with Sinai:

15 The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan. 16 Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever. 17 The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.

The early church was based in Jerusalem: it was from there that believers scattered to other cities (Acts 8:1), and to there that Paul and Barnabas came to resolve the question of the Gentile believers (Acts 15, though this may be simply because the objections were strongest among the believers with the strongest Jewish convictions, who would be found in Jerusalem).

The contrast between Sinai and Zion is brought out in Gal 4:21-27. Israel after the flesh is still based on Sinai; we are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people:--Again, “peoples,” parallel with “nations.” Judging and rebuking are the work of the elders in the gate toward the citizens of the city (Amos 5:10, 15). They envision a society over which the judge has jurisdiction. Up to now, the Lord has been Israel's judge, but the prophet anticipates a time when his rule will extend over all nations.

and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks:--Under the Lord's rule, there will be no more need for weapons. This figure may have been inspired by the reverse transformation mentioned by Joel.

Joel 3:9-12 Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: 10 **Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears:** let the weak say, I am strong. 11 Assemble yourselves, and come,

Isaiah 2-4

all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. 12 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. .

This is the great final battle, whose outcome is the dominion of the Lord over all the earth depicted by Isaiah and Micah.

nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.--When the nations turn their attention toward the law of God, and treasure his revelation above all else, they will not fight with one another, nor prepare themselves for such conflict. This principle has two important implications.

1. The best way to promote peace in the world is to foster the knowledge and love of God's word.
2. The natural outcome of God's word is not conflict, but peace. Conflict may be unavoidable as long as "all nations" have not submitted to the Lord, but war is hateful, and the peacemakers are the ones characterized as the sons of God (Matt 5:9).

The verse is the inspiration for a famous sculpture donated by the Soviet Union to the United Nations in 1959, but the notion that the nations can by themselves bring about such a transformation, apart from submission to the law of God, is completely contrary to the teaching of this paragraph.

In 4:2-6, Isaiah will return to the theme of Zion's restoration, but first he turns to the Day of the Lord, the great period of judgment that will culminate in this restoration. The intermediate section has two main divisions, each introduced by a command to his readers. The first introduces the theme of the Day of the Lord for the first time in Isaiah. (The concept is most discussed by Joel, and if his ministry antedates Isaiah, that may be the source for Isaiah's discussion.) In this first section, one might think that the judgment is to fall primarily on the Gentiles. But the second shows the effect of that day on the nation Israel.

2:5-21, The Fact of the Day of the Lord

5, Command

5 O house of Jacob,--In keeping with the heading at v. 1, Isaiah addresses himself primarily to his compatriots.

come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.--Compare v. 3. Isaiah's invitation to his countrymen is very much like that which the nations will share with one another in the final day. It is not just the pagans who need exhortation to follow the Lord. Until then, those who know the Lord should encourage one another to obedience.

The need for this exhortation to seek their guidance from the Lord becomes clear in the next verse, which relates their reliance on other sources.

6-21, Announcement of the Day of the Lord

This section focuses on the sins of idolatry and pride.

The section is chiasmic with doubling, ABCBAA, and A is itself a doublet that deals with idols and entering into the rock.

6-9, The Sins of the People

This paragraph is addressed to the Lord, and has three parts:

- 6a is a summary: God has forsaken his people.
- 6b-9a outlines the evidence that God has let them go their own way, in a list of sins of which they are guilty.
- 9b is the prophet's request that God judge them.

6 Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob,--The verb is sometimes associated with the statement that God will give his people over to their enemies (Judg 6:13; 2 Ki 21:14), and it might have that sense here, thus forming an inclusio with 9b. But in asking for judgment, 9b suggests that it has not yet fallen, and the prediction of the day of the Lord (11-17) sees it as yet future as well.

The notion that the second clause gives the cause of the first is falsely encouraged by the AV's different translation of *ki* in the two successive clauses. If we translate it consistently, we can read first clause as a summary of what follows: "For you have forsaken your people; for they be replenished" This leads me to suspect that the sense here is more along the lines of Rom 1:24, 26, 28. The focus is not on his punishment for their sin (that comes later), but on his abandoning them to their sin, which then in due time (after the request of 9b) leads to the coming judgment (described in 11-17).

He has let loose their leash, and where have they gone? The rest of the verse traces their devotion to foreign attractions: "the east," "the Philistines," "strangers."

because they be replenished from the east,--In Genesis, the East is the direction away from the land of promise. Abraham came west to follow the Lord, but other people move east to escape him:

- Adam and Eve, 3:24, "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Thus the door of the garden, through which Adam and Eve were driven out, is on the east side.
- Cain, 4:16, "Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden." The expression here is exactly the same as in Isa.
- Men of Babel, 11:2, "And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east [better, "eastward"], that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there." From Ararat to Babylon is an eastward motion, not a motion "from the east." The expression is the same as in Isa.
- Lot, 13:11, "Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other." Again, the same expression as in Isa.

They have filled themselves with things from the east. Their faces are set eastward, away from the Lord, like Adam and Eve, Cain, the men of Babel, and Lot.

and are soothsayers like the Philistines,--Soothsayers ("observers of clouds") were an abomination to the Lord, forbidden to Israel (Deut 18:10-14, "observers of times"). In seeking them, the nation has

Isaiah 2-4

become like its arch-adversaries, the Philistines. Note italics on “are,” and render, “even with soothsayers” (acc. of substance), telling what they are full of .

and they please themselves in the children of strangers.--Note the marginal reading, “abound with.” The land is full of foreigners, who lead them astray.

The LXX is interesting, “Many foreign children are born to them.” The many foreigners in the land would naturally lead to marriages with them, as forbidden in Deut 7:1-4.

The next three pairs are keyed off of the instruction to the king in Deut 17:16-17,

16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

The king was not to multiply to himself horses, or silver and gold, or wives. By eschewing these common symbols of power, he was to lead his people in trusting the Lord.

Solomon's downfall is directly related to his violation of these instructions, in 1 Kings 10-11.

- 10:14-22 describe his wealth.
- 10:26-29 describe his horses and chariots.
- 11:1-9 describe his wives, and importantly, the idolatry into which they led him.

These lead directly to the loss of the kingdom in 11:9-13.

But what is the state of the land now? It is marked by the same affluence and lack of faith as in Solomon's day.

7 Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures;--They have multiplied to themselves silver and gold.

their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots:--They have multiplied to themselves chariots.

8 Their land also is full of idols;--At first glance, in light of the reference to Deut that Isaiah has set up, this seems out of place. How have we moved from wives to idols? There are two explanations, not exclusive.

The first is that Isaiah is recalling Solomon's failing, in which many wives led to many idols.

The second is that he means us to see the idols as false spouses, drawing on an image that he has already introduced in 1:21, and that becomes much more vivid in the prophets of the exile. Israel was to be the wife of Yahweh, but she has turned to many false gods.

they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made:--Instead of recognizing their place in the creation and worshiping the creator, they insist on creating their own gods.

The biblical concept of God as the creator of all things is completely incompatible with the notion that something man forms could be worthy of his worship:

37:19 they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone:

Repeatedly the Bible mocks those who fall into this error: Isa 44:9-20; Ps 115:4-8; 135:15-17. Yet today, many people devote their lives to serving something that men have formed, whether it be a company, or an expensive possession, or titles and recognition from people. We need to be reminded continually that the only one worthy of our worship is the one who has made us.

9 And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself:--All levels of society, from the highest to the lowest, have been seduced by these idols and bow down to them. They offer them the allegiance due to the Lord. Isaiah will pick up these words later, in 5:15, but with reference to the worship toward the Lord that he will compel them to offer. (Note: on the contrasting senses of אָדָם and אֱלֹהִים, see K&D, citing Ps 49:3 among others.)

therefore forgive them not.--God gave them up to their own lusts (6a). In response, they became infatuated with pagan cultures, they devoted their energies to self-enrichment, and bowed down before the work of their own hands. Such people cannot expect forgiveness from the Lord, but only his judgment.

10, Enter the Rock

Note the shift from addressing the Lord to addressing the people. Now Isaiah turns from their sin to the coming judgment. v. 10 corresponds chiastically to 18-21, 11 to 17, and in the middle is the announcement of the day of the Lord.

The **command** of v. 10 is echoed in the **prediction** of vv. 19-21. There (as often in the second panel of a symmetric construction) there is an addition, "when he ariseth to shake terribly [terrify] the earth." Together, these point to the **fulfillment** in the time of the Sixth Seal, in Rev 6:15-17,

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

The repeated portion in Isa 2 tells of men's actions and of the reason for it. Let's first consider the reason.

for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.--We have absolutely no concept of how terrifying the appearance of the Lord will be. He graciously guarded Moses from seeing his face:

Exo 33:20 Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

He protected the children of Israel from seeing his glory in the desert by surrounding it with a thick cloud, so that only a night could the light seep out. In the day that is here described, he will finally drop away the shield, and overwhelm them with his glory.

We saw a preview of this revelation in John 18:6, when the Lord revealed himself to those who came to arrest him as "I am." John records, "they went backward, and fell to the ground." Recall Calvin's comment on this text,

We may infer from this how dreadful and alarming to the wicked the voice of Christ will be, when he shall ascend his throne to judge the world. At that time he stood as a lamb ready to be sacrificed; his majesty, so far as outward appearance was concerned, was utterly gone; and yet when he utters but a single word, his armed and courageous enemies fall down. And what was the word? He thunders no fearful excommunication against them, but only replies, "It is I." What then will be the result, when he shall come, not to be judged by a man, but to be the Judge of the living and the dead; not in that mean and despicable appearance but shining in heavenly glory, and accompanied by his angels?

10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust,--Here is the answer to Calvin's question. Men will flee from that awesome glory. Those who loved life will crawl into tombs and caves; those who delighted in their royal thrones will grovel in the dust.

David Evans observes that the definite singular "the rock" may be an offer of refuge rather than a dismissive suggestion. "The Rock" is a title of the Lord (Deut 32); Psa 31:2,3; and Isa 32:2. In this case, the copula should be read as a disjunction. Faced with the coming judgment, men must either take refuge in the Rock that God provides, or grovel in the dust.

11-17, Humbling in the Day of the Lord

vv. 11 and 17, almost identical, offer a chiasmic summary of the detailed description of the day of the Lord in the middle.

11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,--The verbs are repeated from v. 9. They had chosen to humble themselves and cower before the false gods. Now God will force them to be humbled and cowering before him.

v. 17 repeats this verse almost verbatim, to support the emerging chiasm. The only changes are the omission of "looks" and the reversal of the verbs "humbled" and "bowed down."

and the LORD alone shall be exalted—Here is the ultimate objective of history: to exalt the Lord above all else. Note "alone." The prophet does not speak of a general exaltation of everything, a global progress toward a glorious future, but of the exaltation of the Lord while everything else is abased. Such an aspiration on the part of a creature would be deemed arrogant, but it is completely appropriate for the sovereign creator of all things.

in that day. --This is the first of 43 instances of this phrase in Isaiah. The phrase is a common one with the prophets. Isaiah has not yet told us what day he has in mind, but he is about to, in the next verse, which introduces a long list that forms the center of the chiasm.

12 For the day of the LORD of hosts—Here is the "day" of which the prophet speaks. We read of it 18 times in the prophets, five times in the short book of Joel. Everywhere we meet it, it describes the coming time when men are humbled and the Lord is exalted.

Isaiah is referring to that day, but his construction is a little different from that in most other places (except Ezek 30:3). Literally, he writes, "The Lord of hosts has a day." This construction emphasizes his sovereign oversight of this day. It is not just the day that is associated with him, but the day that he has set according to his own good pleasure.

Isaiah 2-4

As we read these verses, it's worth remembering that the NT picks up the anticipation of the Day of the Lord, sometimes called simply "the day of the Lord" (1 Thes 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10), sometimes "the day of the Lord Jesus (Christ)" (1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14), sometimes "the day of Christ" (Phil 1:10; 2:16; 2 Thes 2:2). To understand these references correctly, we must keep in mind the clear picture of human humbling and divine exaltation in the OT, which is the background against which the NT authors write.

shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up;--He leads off this list by amplifying v. 11.

and he shall be brought low:--Repeating the threat of v. 11.

So thoroughgoing will be the judgment, that all creation will suffer it. Everything that stands for exaltation will bow down before the Lord. Isaiah develops this theme of universal prostration before the Lord by listing several categories of creation, each implicated in man's sin, and represented by a parallel pair:

13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,--The lofty trees bow down, including the oaks. Recall the use of related terms for places of false worship in 1:29, 30, and the use of these trees as materials for idols. The majestic trees that attracted their worship will be humbled.

14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up,--The high places, like the great trees, had attracted idolatrous worship, but they will bow down before the Lord.

15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,--Now he turns from direct idolatry to indirect. After their idols, men place their trust in their fortifications, but these will be powerless before the Lord.

16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.--"Pictures" appears only here, and probably should be understood of a special kind of ship, thus providing a fourth parallel pair. Now the judgment falls upon men's attempts to enrich themselves by commerce.

Paul echoes this vision of universal humbling before the Lord, who alone is exalted, in at least two places.

First, man's sin brings judgment on the whole creation. Isaiah's vision here anticipates Paul's teaching in Rom 8:19-22,

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.
20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same ... 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

People involve all of creation in their sin (worshiping the trees in the high places, building walls to for false security and enriching themselves by commerce). These inanimate things are their crutches. The Lord knocks the crutches away, to humble those who have trusted in them.

Paul's second echo of this picture that all creation will bow before the exalted Lord is in Phil 2.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in

Isaiah 2-4

earth, and *things* under the earth; 11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This promise, that the Son will enjoy the honor that the Father claims in the day of the Lord, is why that day is so readily called “the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Vv. 17-21 roll back down the other side of the chiasm.

- 17 echoes v. 11
- 19 and 21 are a doubling of v. 10.
- 18 and 20 expand 19 and 21, respectively, echoing the theme of idols introduced in v. 8.

17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down ...--Virtually a verbatim repetition of v. 11, reminding us that the humbling of creation in vv. 13-16 is after all just a reflection of the humbling of man.

18-21, Idols and Rocks

We return now to the themes of idolatry and taking refuge in the rocks that we saw in 6-10, but this time it is addressed to the people.

18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish.--Just in case we missed the allusions to idolatrous worship in the predictions of the humbling of the trees and the mountains, Isaiah states explicitly that the idols will be done away.

19 And they shall go—A modification of v. 10, with three major changes.

1. That dealt with the Rock (singular), pointing to the only effective refuge, our divine Lord. This describes the rocks (plural), the features of the physical earth that can provide only superficial shelter.
2. v. 10 was a command, but this a prediction. If people refuse to hide in the Rock, they must take shelter in the rocks.
3. Isaiah adds a temporal clause at the end:

when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.--Our translators here have followed the LXX. The verb is better translated simply “to terrify.” We know from other texts (Hag 2:6, 7, 21; Rev 8:5; 11:19; 16:18) that earthquakes will be one of the means that he uses, but the focus here is on the effect rather than the means. People will be utterly terrified. Rev 6:15-17 records this terror and how people will want to go underground to escape the Lord.

The emotions they experience will include not only terror before the true God, but also disgust with their false gods, whom they will finally realize to be utterly impotent.

his idols of silver, and his idols of gold,--The idols in question are those made of precious metals, much more valuable than wooden idols. Thus the treatment that men accord them is all the more notable.

which they made each one for himself to worship,--Isaiah continues to hammer home the theme of v.

8, which he will develop later as well, that these idols are creatures of men, and not man's creator like the God of Israel.

20 In that day a man shall cast his idols ... to the moles and to the bats;--Not only do they discard them, but they defile them. The bat is unclean (Lev 11:13-19); “mole” is a hapax but is usually understood to refer to the shrew, which would be unclean like the mouse (Lev 11:29).

21 To go into the clefts of the rocks,--Thus the idols (with the help of their makers) also flee the wrath of the Lord.

Summary

The Lord will prove his superiority over other gods by compelling their worshipers to cast them into the caves of the earth. Only he will remain, confirming the wisdom of the admonition in 2:5 to “walk in the light of the Lord.”

2:22-4:1, The Effect of the Day of the Lord

Having introduced this coming day, Isaiah now points out its impact on Jerusalem's society.

2:22, Command

22 Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?--This command complements that in v. 5. There they were told to follow the Lord, who alone will be exalted in the last day. Here they are told to abandon all hope in man, and the sequel will show how feeble mankind is.

3:1-4:1, Judgments on Social Segments

Isaiah describes the judgment that will fall on the leading men (3:1-15) and ladies (3:16-4:1) of Jerusalem. The parallel between the two cases is emphasized with a series of similarities. In both cases,

- The Lord takes away (*sir*) a long list of things.
- The reason for this judgment is the sin of the people, social injustice on the part of the men and haughty pride by the women.
- In an attempt to remedy the situation, citizens try to press one another into undesired responsibilities

3:1-15, Powerful Leaders

First Isaiah describes the judgment (1-7), then the sin that leads to it (8-11), and finally focuses in on the judge who brings the judgment because of the sin (12-15).

1-7, The Judgment

The description of the judgment in turn falls into two parts: the removal of the powerful leaders, and

then a description of the consequences of this removal, in terms of its effects on society. Nothing is said here of the sin, and the only reference to the judge is the subject of the verbs in vv. 1 and 4.

1-3, The Removal of the Powerful Leaders

1 For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,--By itself, this prophecy might be understood literally, as a description of the famine that war brings. But the sequel shows that once again we have Isaiah's technique of an image, followed by the interpretation. When the Lord removes the competent leaders, the society becomes dysfunctional and the economic basics are no longer available. A modern illustration of this dynamic is the economic collapse of Zimbabwe that followed the removal of white landholders who knew how to run the large farms that were the basis of the country's economy.

The list that follows includes every class of ruler and authority on whom the nation might rely, with the exception of the king. As the history of Jeremiah shows, by the end of the monarchy, the king had become virtually a puppet, powerless before the intrigues of his courtiers.

This list includes not only legitimate leaders, but also two references to sources forbidden by the law. When people depart from the Lord, he removes every support, including the illegitimate substitutes they had preferred over him.

The roles are grouped by the omission of the copula into three sets.

2 The mighty man, and the man of war,--The military leader and the common soldier, those who provide material security for the nation.

The four titles in 3:2 are the roles responsible for providing guidance to the common man in daily life. Their position is local, in the cities, rather than at a national level. Two of these occur in Ezek 7:26, with a description of their role:

then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients.

These four are arranged chiastically, with civil authorities on the outside and spiritual ones at the center.

The judge—The function of judging was assigned to the “princes” whom we met in 1:23, originally appointed by Moses to help decide issues among the people. Theirs was a local, not a national, ministry:

Deut 16:18 Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

the prophet—Ezek 7:26 describes the prophet's contribution as “vision,” the ability to give the people a word from God appropriate to their current situation. The lack of a prophet was a sign of spiritual decline; compare the era in which Samuel arise,

1 Samuel 3:1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

Prophets provide God's revelation to the people in the absence of a complete canon; cf. Acts 13:1, the

Isaiah 2-4

“prophets and teachers” in the church at Antioch in the early days. Their role is taken later by the “pastors and teachers,” Eph 4:11.

the prudent--The Hebrew word literally means “enchanter,” and is forbidden in Deut 18:10 (“one that useth divination”) and 18:14 (“diviners”). This type of false prophet examined things (like the pattern formed by a handful of arrows that is dropped, or the shape of a sheep's liver) to answer questions. A modern equivalent would be a palm reader or someone who reads tea leaves. Note that the position between prophet and ancient in Ezek 7:26 is occupied by the priest, who is otherwise absent from Isaiah's list. Is Isaiah suggesting that those who were to be spiritual leaders have in fact gone over to the occult? It would not be unprecedented for those with an interest in spiritual things, having been disappointed with a superficial form of the true faith, to seek after demonic power. Recall Episcopalian Bishop James Pike in the 1960's and his dallings with the occult in an effort to make contact with his deceased son.

the ancient—The word is most often translated “elder.” These are the mature men of the city, who would rule in the city gates. Since the 1960's it has become fashionable to despise the old, but throughout the Bible their experience and counsel is repeatedly recommended.

The final five, in 3:3, may be more at the national level, and describe those who would enjoy the esteem of the common people.

3 The captain of fifty,--This is the rank dispatched by King Ahaziah of Samaria to arrest Elijah in 2 Kings 1. Thus it appears to be a rank in the royal guard.

and the honourable man,--Literally “one whose face is lifed up,” one who is regarded highly. This would be a courtier in the court. The title is held by Naaman, captain of the guard of the king of Syria, in 2 Kings 5:1.

and the counsellor,--Another title from the court, describing what we would call a minister of state or cabinet secretary.

and the cunning artificer,--Skilled craftsmen, who would be patronized by the court to provide luxuries for those of high estate. 2 Kings 24:14, 16 describes how Nebuchadnezzar removed all the craftsmen and smiths from the land, no doubt so that he could enjoy their services.

and the eloquent orator.--Literally, “expert of incantations.” We have to do here with another of the occult arts, someone expert in casting spells, perhaps the “charmer” of Deut 18:11. Though contrary to the law, such people were retained by the court; cf. Saul's consultation with the witch of Endor in 1 Sam. 28. The Lord will remove them as well.

4-7, Consequences of this Removal

This section is set off from what goes before by the shift in person (now the Lord is speaking, as shown by the first person in v. 4), and from what follows by the shift from consequences to root causes in v. 8. The similarity between 4 and 12a ties these together.

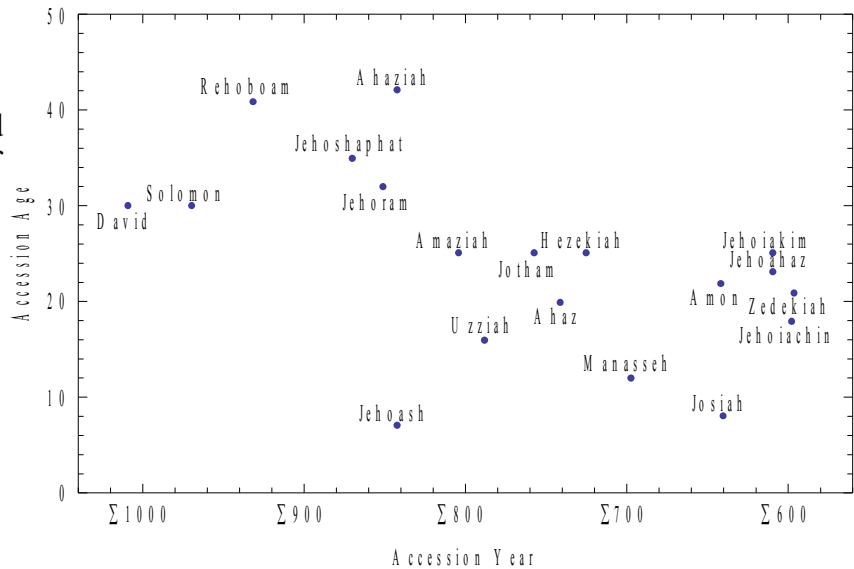
4 And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.--The Bible constantly sets value on age and maturity. In the OT, the elders of the land are charged with judgment in the gate of the city (Deut 21:19; 22:15; 25:7; Josh 20:4; Ruth 4:11; Prov 31:23). In the NT, one of the three

Isaiah 2-4

descriptions of those in authority in the local church is that they are elder. Depriving the land of experienced leadership is a form of judgment, and loss of the elders in the gate is one of the consequences of the Babylonian invasion, Lam 5:14:

The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their musick.

“Babes” is literally “irresponsible deeds,” based on the root for irresponsibility and childishness that we encountered in 1:16 (“doings”), and is here used by metonymy of the effect (putting the action for the person who does it). The people get the leaders they deserve.



This prophecy is reflected in the ages at which the kings of Judah assume the throne; see the graph. The corner turns with Athaliah in 842. Before her, no one younger than 30 takes the throne; after her (starting with Jehoash, who ruled under the guidance of Jehoiada the priest), no one older than 25. (Isaiah's ministry is in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.)

4 And I will give—Though the new leaders are defective, still it is the Lord who sets them up, in accordance with his later revelation to Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4:17,

the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

The next verse describes the result of the lack of responsible oversight.

5 And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour:--We tend to think of oppression as something that the strong do to the poor, leading us to condemn the strong and feel pity for the poor. But in fact, fallen human nature is such that everyone would oppress the other if he had opportunity to. Human government is needed to keep this natural tendency in check.

There is an order in society, and the rest of the verse gives us two of the rules that it should follow, while anticipating that they will be broken in the time of which Isaiah writes.

the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient,--The Scriptures consistently value age and experience.

Lev 19:32 Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.

1 Tim 5:1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;

We are accustomed to recognize this principle. Even unbelievers recognize unruly children as undesirable. But the next grates on our modern sensibilities.

Isaiah 2-4

and the base against the honourable.--We are accustomed to think in terms of a class-free society. But the Bible recognizes class distinctions. Rom 13:7 helps put this in context:

Rom 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

There is nothing intrinsically godly about tribute (poll or land tax) and custom (mercantile tax), but where the society imposes them, believers are to respect them. Similarly, where society has recognized some people as worthy of honor, we are to respect those standards.

There are godly bases for honor. Compare the qualifications for elders in 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1. But beyond that, even in our “class-free society,” we assign honor to elected officials, business leaders, etc. Such distinctions, even if unbiblical, are necessary for society to function cleanly. With no structure, a society disintegrates, and that is what Isaiah anticipates. Recognizing the world's honor, even when we do not agree with it, is an important aspect of “seek[ing] the peace of the city” in which we are sojourners, Jer 29:7.

6 When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand:--In this breakdown, people recognize the need for someone to take charge and be a point of coordination. Anyone who appears to have any resources at all, even a garment to wear, is called upon to provide some order.

7 In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer;--The disintegrated society is like a battered person, the same image that we saw in 1:5,6.

for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people.--Ordinarily, people aspire to positions of honor. But in the social breakdown that Isaiah predicts, no one is willing to undertake this responsibility.

8-11, The Sin

Now Isaiah takes us behind the scenes to see the reason for the judgment. The section is a detailed and complex chiasm. The outer members remind us of the consequences that were detailed in the previous section. Next we have their sin, and in the center, the ultimate offense.

A. Consequences	8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen:	a: Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. b: 10 Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. a: 11 Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.
B. Sin	because their tongue	and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not.
	and their doings are against the LORD,	9 The shew of their countenance doth witness against them;
C. Core Offense	to provoke the eyes of his glory.	

8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen:-- “Ruined” is the verb from which the noun “ruin” in v.6 is derived. Why has the society come to this disastrous condition?

because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD--He draws our attention to what they say as well as what they do. These will be explained in v. 9a. Both are “against the Lord,” opposed to him.

to provoke the eyes of his glory--They do not even attempt to hide their sin, but deliberately provoke, or rebel against, his glorious eyes. (In Hebrew, the possessive has to come at the end of a chain of genitives, even if it belongs to something earlier in the chain.) The point here is that

- the Lord has eyes; he can see what is going on.
- His eyes are glorious, majestic, awesome. Compare the description of our Lord in Rev 1:14; 2:18; 19:12, “his eyes were as a flame of fire.” Military officers cultivate what they call the “command look” to inspire their subordinates to obedience. The Lord presents the ultimate “command look.”
- In spite of this, his people rebel openly.

We see this often in toddlers, who will deliberately break the rules in full view of their parents to assert their own will.

9 The shew of their countenance doth witness against them--This corresponds to “their doings are against the Lord.” You can tell by looking at their faces that their sin is deliberate. They know they are rebelling.

and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not--This corresponds to “their tongue.” Not only do they brazenly oppose the Lord, but they even boast about it.

Now we return to a reminder of the consequences that come from their rebellion. Three times we are told that the wicked will suffer the consequences of their sin. The first and third are addressed to the wicked, while the second is called to the attention of the righteous.

Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves--It is the uniform teaching of Scripture that we reap what we sow (Prov 22:8; 2 Cor 9:6; Gal. 6:7,8). Note in particular Gal 6:7, “God is not mocked.” If we disobey his word, we will suffer the consequences—if not in this life, then in the life to come (Ps 73).

The converse is not necessarily true at an individual level (John 9:2,3), but even there, the sorrow we see in the world around us is the result of Adam's sin. Recall the discussion above of the impact of the fall on all creation, in 2:11-17.

10 Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings--At first glance, this verse appears to be just the opposite of the previous one, reassuring the righteous that they will be rewarded for their righteousness. Two observations suggest that this is not the case.

1. Note the change in number between the two halves of the verse, reflecting a shift between two groups of people. The first half of the verse (singular) explicitly describes the righteous, suggesting that the plural refers to the wicked.
2. In the second half (plural pronouns), “doings” is *ma(alelim*, childish, irresponsible deeds, the same word we just had in 3:8 (“doings”). This term always refers to the deeds of the wicked.

Isaiah 2-4

The righteous man does not deserve a reward, for any righteousness that we can do is only by the Lord's grace. But the righteous are often oppressed by the wicked, and should take comfort in the coming judgment that will fall on the wicked. The sentiment is not just an OT position.

2 Thes 1:6-10 Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Rev 6:9-11 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

11 Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.-- Once again the prophet addresses the wicked and assures him that he will be repaid for what he has done.

12-15, The Judge

The third element in the description focuses on the judge. Four times this paragraph emphasizes the Lord's people, indicating his personal concern for the injustice that is common. Compare Zech 2:8, "he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

12 As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.--He picks up the theme of v. 4, with three enhancements:

- The addition of "my people" shows that the Lord takes a personal interest in the inadequate rule that is provided by the unqualified rulers.
- The future of v. 4 is present. The judgment simply emphasizes what is already the case.
- He adds a reference to the rule of women over them, probably reflecting the usurpation of Athaliah around 880 BC.

In our day, the latter comment is politically incorrect. We glory in how women are breaking glass ceilings and aspiring to positions of leadership. But Isaiah looks down on such arrangements. The reason is probably that civil government begins in the home, where God has ordained that the man should lead and the woman should submit (Eph 5:22-33; 1 Cor 11:3-10). Higher levels of government are an extension of family government, and the preeminence of women in government reflects a failure of men to provide godly leadership at the family level.

O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.--Each of us is individually responsible for our sin, but unqualified leaders can certainly enhance the process. They

Isaiah 2-4

lead them astray, and destroy the markers that God had given them concerning the right way.

13 The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the peoples.--Three things are interesting in this verse.

First, we are back in the **judicial** framework of ch. 1. Note that the Lord is both plaintiff (“to plead”) and judge. This is a very bad situation in which to be a defendant. The judge is not only favorable to the plaintiff, he *is* the plaintiff. What chance can a defendant have in such a situation?

Second, the last word is **plural**, not singular, in Hebrew. In the next verse we will move to the judgment of God's own people, but to show us this, Isaiah brings us back to the day of the Lord, when all nations will be judged. This is a consistent pattern in the prophets: when they give a series of oracles against the nations, Israel is included. Nor is the pattern limited to the OT:

1 Pet 4:17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Third, his **posture** is interesting. Usually, we think of him seated on his throne. But recall David's frequent pleas in the psalms, “Arise, O Lord,” always to request the Lord to intervene in judgment:

7:6 **Arise, O LORD**, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me *to* the judgment *that* thou hast commanded.

9:19 **Arise, O LORD**; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

10:12-15 **Arise, O LORD**; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble. ... 15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil *man*: seek out his wickedness *till* thou find none.

17:13 **Arise, O LORD**, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked,

44:22-26 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. 23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? **arise**, cast *us* not off for ever. 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, *and* forgettest our affliction and our oppression? 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth. 26 **Arise** for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

This was how the Lord initiated the judgments of the Day of the Lord, in 2:19, 21,

Isa 2:19-21 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. 20 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made *each one* for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; 21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he **ariseth** to shake terribly the earth.

When he is pictured as standing, it is usually for judgment:

Amos 9:1 I saw the Lord **standing** upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword:

Psa 82:1 God **standeth** in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.

Isaiah 2-4

This last is particularly noteworthy. As we saw in our study of John 10:35, the “gods” here are the rulers of the people, so called because they are the stewards of God's word and represent him to the people. This responsibility makes their misdeeds all the more serious. The next verse shows that this is the group to whom the Lord is addressing himself here.

14 The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof:-- These are two of the categories described in vv. 2-3.

for ye have eaten up the vineyard;--He anticipates the song of ch. 5, where the nation is described as God's vineyard. They have devoured it instead of tending it.

the spoil of the poor is in your houses.--They have enriched themselves at the expense of the poor. The lower social classes (notably the orphans and widows) are of special concern to the Lord.

Psa 10:14 the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.

Israel is exhorted to remember that they were once poor people in Egypt, and care for the poor is the foundation of OT practical righteousness. But those who attained to power in the society have forgotten this:

15 What mean ye—The question (*mah leka* 19x, *mah lakem* 3x) is common. It is often translated, “What ails you?” The Lord demands that the abusive rulers of the society explain their misdeeds.

that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord GOD of hosts.--It is the Lord's people whom they have abused, and it is to him that they will answer.

Recall that this section is a component of vv. 1-15. The removal of the leaders (1-3), and the resulting decay of society (4-7), is the Lord's judgment upon them for the abuses outlined here. The judgment is in fact an unveiling of what was already there; the future of v. 4 is the present of v. 12. They thought they had a well-ordered society, but they were abusing the poor and the upright. So the Lord will allow the entire society to fall into anarchy, revealing the wickedness of the leaders themselves.

This is an example of God's harvest law, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7). The primary purpose of the judgment is not vindictive punishment, but revelation. We are back once again to the notion that God defines himself in terms of truth and revelation. This judgment is a stripping away of human hypocrisy to show their true nature. As we shall see in ch. 4, it is not the end point of the process, but a step in that direction.

3:16-4:1, Pampered Ladies

Now Isaiah turns from the powerful men to the pampered ladies. It is helpful to think about possible motives for reviewing their behavior.

- 3:12 anticipated that the former leadership would be replaced by women and children. Who are these women who will take over the leadership of the country from the men? What are they like?
- Perhaps Isaiah has in mind the influence of women on their men. These women, rather than encouraging their husbands in godliness, were simply concerned to grow their own wardrobes and enhance their own prestige, and thus encouraged their husbands to amass wealth. Now they

will lose those ill-gotten glories.

This time, the sin comes at the beginning, and there is no separate section focusing on the motives of the judge.

16, The Sin

16 Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion—Note the plural. The singular (1:8) refers to the city, but the plural to the women within it.

are haughty,--cf. 2:11f. This is the fundamental sin, an attitude of pride and self-exaltation. The following words, describing their vain outward ornamentation, should be understood in the light of this basic inward fault.

and walk with stretched forth necks—To lift up their heads as high as possible, perhaps to show off their neck jewelry.

and wanton eyes,--Flirting with those around them.

walking and mincing as they go,--With small and deliberate steps, perhaps constrained by the jewelry they wore on their ankles, as mentioned in the next verse:

and making a tinkling with their feet:--With their ankle jewelry, perhaps in the form of gold chains extending between their legs.

3:17-4:1, The Judgment

17 Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion,-- Instead of thick flowing hair, they will have running sores on their heads.

and the LORD will discover their secret parts.--They will lose their fine raiment, and be exposed in shame. This judgment of nakedness is a common threat throughout the prophets:

Jer 13:22 For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, *and* thy heels made bare.

Ezek 16:36-37 Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; 37 Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all *them* that thou hast loved, with all *them* that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

26 They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. 27 Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom *brought* from the land of Egypt:

This kind of judgment is also proclaimed on other nations:

Isa 47:1-3 (of Babylon) Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: *there is* no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. 2 Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. 3 Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy

Isaiah 2-4

shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet *thee as* a man.

Nahum 3:5 (of Nineveh) Behold, I *am* against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.

The basic idea is, “You have behaved shamefully in private, so I will shame you publicly.”

It is worth pausing to ask why nakedness is shameful. It was not in Eden, before the fall (Gen 2:25, “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed).” But when Adam and Eve broke God's law, the very first thing we read (Gen 3:7) is that “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

The shamefulness of nakedness is directly related to the fall. After their sin, Adam and Eve did not become ashamed of their ability to stand erect and walk, or of their ability to speak, or of their ability to make and use tools. They did not hide their feet, or their mouths, or their hands. But they did become ashamed of their ability to procreate. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that we pass sin on to our children. Parents identify with their children, and take pride in their intelligence, their good looks, their accomplishments. But when a couple is expecting a child, they can't know whether it will be smart or slow, strong or weak, or even (apart from modern technology) male or female. There is only one thing about that child they can know with absolute certainty: it will be a sinner, a rebel against God and under his condemnation.

This realization should lead us to a certain modesty about our ability to reproduce. Our sexuality is a wonderful gift, but at the same time it reminds us of our sinfulness, and the curse that we inevitably pass on to our children. Modesty in dress is a natural way to show that awareness. God did not have to command Adam and Eve to cover themselves. The minute they knew their sin, they did it themselves.

Today, people try to deny the testimony of their own consciences that they are sinners, and flaunt their sexuality by immodest dress. In the process, they are actually subjecting themselves to what the Bible considers a shameful judgment for sin.

18 In that day the Lord will take away—Now he begins a long list of the things they treasure of which he will deprive them. Structurally, this corresponds to the list of male leaders taken away in vv. 2-3, but it is much longer.

the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, --For the sake of which they made those mincing steps.

and their cauls,--The word appears only here, but on the basis of a cognate in Ugaritic, may refer to small ornaments representing the sun god. See also the next item. As with the leaders, so here not everything that the Lord takes away from them is righteous. He deprives them of their pagan confidences as well as of legitimate adornments.

and their round tires like the moon,--Literally, “little crescents,” ornaments indicating the moon god.

19 The chains,--Pendants, either around their necks or from their ears.

and the bracelets,--Ornaments on their arms.

and the mufflers,--Another *hapax*, probably referring to a veil wrapped around the face.

Isaiah 2-4

20 The bonnets,--Headdresses.

and the ornaments of the legs,--Not only the jingling ornaments of v. 18, but some other kind of extravagant jewelry.

and the headbands,--Something that is tied; a ribbon, or perhaps a breast-band. In Jer 2:32 it describes a bride's attire.

and the tablets,--Literally, "houses of soul" or "houses of breath," perhaps perfume bottles or sachets.

and the earrings,--Elsewhere (Isa 3:3; Jer 8:17; Qoh 10:11) the noun means "incantation." Here it is probably a good-luck charm worn to ward off evil.

21 The rings,--For the fingers; elsewhere it describes the signet rings of Pharaoh and Ahasuerus.

and nose jewels,--They decorated not only their ears and their fingers but also their noses.

22 The changeable suits of apparel,--Not their everyday attire, but something for special occasions.

and the mantles,--An outer garment.

and the wimples,--A shawl, as in Ruth 3:15.

and the crimping pins,--Or as the Arabic suggests, a bag or purse.

23 The glasses,--Probably mirrors.

and the fine linen,--No doubt this was associated with some particular item of clothing, but we don't know what it is.

and the hoods,--Another headdress, perhaps a turban.

and the veils.--Yet another piece of drapery.

Note the redundancy: three veils, as many as three headdresses, two kinds of leg ornament, inner and outer garments, jewels on the ear, nose, and finger. Note also the pagan influences: images of the sun and moon, and good-luck charms. The overall picture is of excess, corrupted consumption.

In describing the leaders, Isaiah foretold the replacement of responsible government with children who are unable to rule. Here also, the women's ornaments are replaced with substitutes that make them less attractive.

24 And it shall come to pass,--Like the substitution of women and children for qualified rulers in 1-15, so this judgment involves a substitution.

that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink;--With their perfume bottles gone, the natural stink of their sin becomes overwhelming.

and instead of a girdle a rent;--Instead of "rent," the word probably means "rope." Their costly waistbands are replaced with a crude cord.

and instead of well set hair baldness;--Their three kinds of headdress will be unable to hide the baldness that results from the scurvy of v. 17. This verse illustrates 1 Cor 11:6, which says that it is a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven.

and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth;--"Stomacher" is a hapax; the LXX renders it

“purple tunic,” that is, a luxurious garment. It will be replaced with the most humble cloth.

and burning instead of beauty.--“Burning” probably refers to a burn on the flesh, a brand or scar, which will mar their loveliness.

Recall our comments at the end of 3:15. As there, the replacement is not so much vindictive as instructive. The ornaments that they thought so beautiful really indicated an attitude of pride and haughtiness that was despicable to the Lord. By taking away those ornaments and replacing them with ugliness, the Lord shows their true nature in his eyes. There may be a parallel here to 64:6, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”

25 Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.--Not only will the women lose their attractiveness, but they will also lose those who had appreciated their beauty. They have neither loveliness nor lovers. The 2fs shifts focus from the daughters of Zion, to Zion personified as a woman.

26 And her gates shall lament and mourn;--The gates were the center of civil life, the places of commerce and of the elders' rule, where one could gauge the heartbeat of the city. They will be filled with sorrow and lament.

and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.--Zion is now represented as a woman who is so distressed that she cannot support herself, but collapses to the ground in sorrow.

It is interesting that a series of coins struck by Vespasian and Titus on the conquest of Jerusalem in AD 70 depict a woman seated under a palm tree, with her hands bound behind her back, under the title, IUDEA CAPTA, “Captive Judah” (<http://www.romancoins.info/VIC-Historical1.html#judea>). The image may have been suggested by this prophecy, perhaps under the influence of Josephus, a learned Jew who became influential in Roman government at the time of the fall of Judea.

This curse is finally reversed in ch. 52

Isa 52:2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, *and* sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

4:1 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.--Here is another parallel with the judgment on the prominent leaders. In 3:6, the removal of the qualified leaders led to efforts to force anyone with any resources at all into the position of ruler. Now the women are trying to find husbands. With so many men slain (v. 25), they are willing to take anyone under any terms.

Summary

The effect of the Day of the Lord is to remove qualified leadership, and to dishonor the pampered ladies who defined the high society of Jerusalem. Everything that had been a source of pride has been destroyed, to teach the people to “cease from man” (2:22).

4:2-6, Restoration of Zion → 2:2-4

Isaiah finishes off this section by returning to a message of hope, the restoration of Zion after the

Isaiah 2-4

judgment has purged the society, thus closing the inclusio that began with 2:2-4. There is an important difference, though.

- The focus in 2:2-4 was on how the Gentile nations would flock to Zion to learn the law of the Lord. The exhortation in 2:5 and the sequel in chapters 2-3 show that the nation of Israel was far from being a good example to them.
- Now we read of Israel's restoration to the Lord.

On the whole flow, compare Rom 10:19; 11:11. Israel is broken off through unbelief, the Gentiles are drawn to the Lord, and finally Israel is drawn back.

4:2 In that day—This is the seventh use of this phrase in Isa. The first six are all within 2:6-4:1, and describe the terrible judgments that will fall in the day of the Lord (2:12). So when we read the phrase here, we are prepared for more of the same. What a surprise, then to find the prophet returning to the joyful prospects of restoration already adumbrated in 2:2-4.

Branch of the Lord ... fruit of the earth.--There is an extensive discussion among the commentators as to what is being referred to here.

“Branch” and “fruit” are both agricultural terms, and some have supposed that the promise is of fruitful crops after the judgments of the day of the Lord. The coming kingdom certainly will be characterized by fruitfulness:

Isa 35:1-2 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. 2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, *and* the excellency of our God.

Yet the exalted description here (“beautiful and glorious ... excellent and comely”) seems inappropriate to agricultural produce, and agricultural devastation has not been highlighted as a characteristic of the day of the Lord.

Calvin generalizes beyond agriculture to speak of all of God's blessings,

an unusual and abundant supply of grace, which will relieve the hungry; ... These words unquestionably denote a rich supply both of spiritual and of earthly blessings.

There are good reasons to understand the metaphors as referring to a very specific “supply of grace,” the person of the Messiah himself. These reasons are clearest with respect to the first designation, “the branch of the Lord,” and the parallelism then leads us to seek to understand the second, “the fruit of the earth,” in a related sense.

shall the branch of the LORD—“Branch” is a noun derived from a verb meaning “to sprout forth.” We understand this as a designation of the Messiah. Reasons:

1. The Targum interpreted it in this way: “at that time shall YHWH's Messiah be for joy and majesty.”
2. The biological image of Messiah as sprouting forth originated in David's last words, 2 Sam 23:5. After describing the ideal ruler in vv. 3-4, David says, using the verb corresponding to the noun “branch,”

Isaiah 2-4

Is not my house so with God?

For he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure:

For *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire,

Will he not cause it to sprout [branch]?

3. The metaphor is appropriate to Isaiah, on three grounds:

- (a) It fits the argument beautifully. He has just described the loss of human rulers, and is about to describe his redemptive work among the remnant (vv. 3-4). Introducing the Messiah at this point fits perfectly, while a reference to agricultural plenty is unconnected.
- (b) Isaiah uses the agricultural imagery of the Messiah as sprouting forth (though with a different verb):
 - i. 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:
 - ii. 53:2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground:
- (c) In 28:5, the words here rendered “beautiful” and “comely” are applied to the Lord himself.

In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory [*cbiy* “beauty”], and for a diadem of beauty [*tiferet* “comely”], unto the residue of his people,

Note the context. In 28:1, 4, these two words describe the fading glory of the drunkards of Ephraim and their land. Agricultural glory is transient. The only true glory is the Lord's. Compare the same contrast in 35:1,2.

4. This very noun is a title for Messiah in later prophets, which are no doubt alluding to this text.

- (a) Jer 23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.
- (b) Jer 33:15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.
- (c) Zech 3:8; 6:12 [of Joshua the high priest, as a type of the coming Messiah] behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. ... Behold the man whose name *is* The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:

be beautiful and glorious,--The Hebrew construction *hyh l-* implies a process: “the Branch of the Lord shall become Beauty and Honor.”

- “beauty” *cebiy* describes the attractiveness of jewelry (Ezek 7:20), or of a city or nation (Dan 11:16, 41, 45). Notably, David uses it to describe the majesty of fallen Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:19).
- “glory” *kabod* is by itself an acceptable translation. It is the word used of the glory of the Lord. But in the context, it is important to understand that it conveys the sense of honor.

The emphasis on process particularly suits the Messiah. In his first advent, when he was still “a tender plant, and a root out of a dry ground,” “there is no beauty that we should desire him” (53:2). But when

Isaiah 2-4

he returns as the “branch of the Lord,” his beauty and glory will be evident to all.

and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely—By the parallelism as well as the similarity in imagery, “the fruit of the earth” must be related to “the branch of the Lord,” and “comely” here is applied directly to the Lord in 28:5. So we should understand the phrase as a reference to the Messiah. What does mean?

While “earth” *arec* has a very broad semantic range, it is most commonly used to refer, not to the world as an entirety (that would be *tebel*), or to the soil (that would be *adamah*), but to a particular land or territory. The precise phrase appears only in reference to the produce of the promised land, in Num 13:20, 26; Deut 1:25 (the report of the spies). So we should translate “the fruit of the land [of Israel].

It does seem unusual for “fruit of the earth” to refer to a person rather than a plant, but it is not unprecedented. People are often described as “fruit” in the phrase “fruit of the womb.” And Isa 37:31 offers an unusual parallel that may well lie behind this reference. The context is Isaiah's prophecy to Hezekiah on the occasion of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem. Isaiah's oracle combines the agricultural and personal senses of the idiom:

Isa 37:30-32 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat *this* year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the **fruit** thereof [agricultural]. 31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear **fruit** upward [people]: 32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

This title for the Messiah thus emphasizes his origin from the land. In spite of the judgments that will fall, the nation Israel will not be destroyed. The future redeemer will arise from the ruins (as the “fruit of the land”), under divine power (thus “the sprout of the Lord”).

There may be a parallel in these two titles to the two NT titles used for our Lord, “Son of God” and “Son of Man.” It is misleading to apply these titles to our Lord's “divine nature” and “human nature,” as is sometimes done. Such language was created by the church councils, and does not appear in the text of Scripture. The titles Son of God and Son of Man both apply to him as a complete person, and express his twofold origin. As the Son of God, he is the branch of the Lord; as the Son of Man, he is the fruit of the land.

... for them that are escaped of Israel.--Isaiah's emphasis here is on how the remnant perceive the Messiah, not on his universal glory. He will possess a glory that will force “every knee [to] bow” (Phil 2:10), but the focus here is on the response of Israel's remnant, to which we have already been introduced in 1:8, 9, 27.

The sentiment is similar to that of 1 Peter 2:7-8, which may be written with this verse in mind:

2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

In other words, this verse is describing the response in faith on the part of the Jewish remnant in the

Isaiah 2-4

Day of the Lord. That day will be “a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness” (Joel 2:2), yet in the midst of the judgment there will be those whose attitude is reverence and worship rather than rebellion.

The next verse shows the result of this attitude:

4:3 And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem,--

These phrases describe the same group as “the escaped of Israel” in the previous verse. The change from plural to singular is an artifact of English translation; all three nouns are collective, describing the group.

shall be called holy,--This is Isaiah's word. He uses it 38 times, nearly twice as many as the next book (Leviticus), and the only book that uses it more frequently is Habakkuk, whose two uses are crammed into a much smaller space.

The use here is remarkable. This is the only place where Isaiah calls the people “holy.” Isa 58:13 uses it to describe the Sabbath, but the other 36 instances all describe the Lord, mostly in the divine title “the Holy One of Israel” that we have seen in the only instance of the term up to this point, 1:4. Thus 57:15 declares,

Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy;

When the remnant turns their eyes in worshipful appreciation to the one who is the Branch of the Lord and the Fruit of the Land, they receive this divine title “Holy.” Compare the promise of the Lord to the Church of Philadelphia (Rev 3:12),

I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* my new name.

The pampered ladies of 3:16-4:1 had been reduced to seeking a man, any man, and beseeching him, only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach (4:1).

But those in view here receive a far loftier name, that of the Lord God. (The link with 4:1 suggests a marriage theme, which is picked up in the “defence” of 4:5 (see below)).

Again, Peter may have this text in view:

2 Pet 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:--Instead of “among,” a better translation would be “for.” Those who escape, who are left, who remain after the judgments of the day of the Lord are not the result of the random vagaries of war, but a select company whom the Lord has set aside, written down for salvation. Compare the description of the destruction of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar in Ezek 9, where the Lord first has a man with an inkhorn

Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof (v. 4)

and then commands the other five destroyers,

5 Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: 6 Slay utterly old *and* young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom *is* the mark;

4:4 When the Lord shall have—The perfect tense here reminds us that the events are not being described in the order they occur.

Chapter 3 described the sins of the men and of the women of Jerusalem, and a subsequent revelatory judgment that stripped away their hypocritical respectability.

Next, the Lord will remove their sin, as described in this verse.

After that, there will be the turning to him that is reported in 4:2-3.

He again treats the two categories, the powerful leaders and the pampered ladies:

washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion,--The first reference is to the women, in the same terms as 3:16. "Filth" is literally "excrement," and recalls the judgment of 3:24, where their delicate ornaments and perfume-bottles are replaced with disgusting filth. We noted there that this replacement was not so much vindictive judgment as a revelation of their true nature. Now we see that it is not the end of the process. After making manifest the ugliness of their sin, the Lord now removes it, and washes it away. Only when they have been thus cleansed can they exhibit the faith described in 4:2.

and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof—The clear reference of "daughters of Zion" to the women of 3:16-4:1 suggests that we should understand this clause to refer to the bloodshed that results from the removal of the leaders in 3:1-15, and that in fact reveals the true nature of the abuses that they approved while they were in office. As with the women, so with the men, this revelatory judgment is followed with purging.

by the spirit of judgment,--Elsewhere when "spirit" and "judgment" are associated, the reference is always to the divine spirit:

Isa 28:5-6 In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, 6 And for a **spirit of judgment** to him that sitteth in judgment,

Isa 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my **spirit** upon him: he shall bring forth **judgment** to the Gentiles.

Mic 3:8 But truly I am full of power by the **spirit** of the LORD, and of **judgment**, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

It is God's spirit who will take away their sin, thus completing the process of judgment.

and by the spirit of burning.--This cleansing is described by burning. Cf. 6:6,7, where Isaiah, having realized his sin, is purged by coals brought from the altar.

We have seen four steps here that are ubiquitous in God's dealings with men.

1. We see them first in their hypocrisy, the men in their well-ordered positions of rule, the women in their finery. In reality, the men are oppressing the poor, and the women are proud and

haughty.

2. So the Lord strips away their superficial beauty. This is the point of the judgment described in ch. 3. It is not so much vindictive as revelatory. The disintegration of society and the resulting widespread oppression shows what has been happening all along under the leaders; the ugliness of the women shows the true nature of their haughtiness. This revelation may take place externally, in the eyes of all the world, but each of us who is a believer has experienced it in the process of repentance.
3. Following the revelation of sin, the Lord removes this ugliness by his Spirit (4:4).
4. Finally, those thus cleansed recognize in the Messiah the only true source of beauty and glory (4:2,3).

4:5 And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion,-- Better, "the entire dwelling place of Mt. Zion" (see note). "Dwelling place" *makon* always refers to the Lord's dwelling, and is here used to tell us that Mt. Zion is named in reference to the temple.

and upon her assemblies,--This is the word that describes the "holy convocations" of Israel in the descriptions of the holy days in Lev 23 and Num 28-29. In 1:13, the Lord expressed disgust with their assemblies, but now he delights in them.

a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night:--The sign of God's immediate presence.

- It led them out of Egypt after the death of the firstborn (Exod 13:21-22).
- It marked Sinai when the Lord descended there to give the law (Exod 19:18): "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."
- It came upon the tabernacle at its dedication (Exod 40:34-38).
- It accompanied the tabernacle throughout the wilderness (Num 10:33-36).
- A similar apparition accompanied the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Ki 8:10,11; 2 Chr 5:13,14), but it apparently did not continue, for it prevented the priests from ministering, and later they certainly did minister in the temple.

There is no reference to the glory-cloud once Israel enters the land, except at the dedication of the temple, and that is only temporary. But now it will be a persistent presence over all of Mt Zion.

for upon all the glory—The glorious Branch of the Lord with his purged, holy people

shall be a defence.--This is another description of the cloud and fire that hovers over the city. The Hebrew word is *xuppah* (Strong's 2646), and only occurs elsewhere (Joel 2:16; Psa 19:5) of the bridal chamber. After purging them of their sin, God meets with his assembled people in sacred marriage.

Perhaps Paul has this passage in mind when he writes,

Eph 5:25-27 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word [Isa 4:4], 27 That he might present it to himself [Isa 4:5] a glorious church, not having spot, or

Isaiah 2-4

wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

4:6 And there shall be a tabernacle—A booth *succah*, a shelter in the field in which a shepherd can gather his flocks for protection from the elements (cf. Gen 33:17). This is clearly metaphorical. What reality does it described?

This is one of three places where Isaiah, in very similar terms, describes shelter from the elements of nature.

4:6	25:4	32:2
And there shall be a tabernacle	For thou hast been ...	And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, as rivers of water in a dry place,
for a shadow in the daytime from the heat ,	a shadow from the heat ,	as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.
and for a place of refuge , and for a covert from storm and from rain.	a refuge from the storm ,	and a covert from the tempest ;

The highlighted words are the same across all three verses, except that “covert” *seter* in 32:2 is a close cognate to “covert” *mistor* in 4:6. The indefinite shelter of v.6 is identified as the Lord in 25:4, and as a man in 32:2. Thus the vision of restoration in ch. 4 ends as it began, pointing us to the coming Messiah who is both God and man. So Elizabeth Clephane understood the verse when she paraphrased it in her famous hymn,

Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand,
The **shadow** of a mighty rock within a weary land;
A home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat, and the burden of the day.

Though there are three nouns (shadow, refuge, storm), the parallels make clear that two threats are in view, the heat of day and the driving rain. Both may be images of divine judgment. “The spirit of burning” was described in 4:4 in this sense, and overwhelming rain was the means of judgment in the days of Noah. Our Lord is our protection from the wrath of a holy God.

Notes

My People

The phrase appears 27x in Isaiah. Who is the antecedent of the pronoun?

Often it is explicitly the Lord: 1:3; 10:24; 19:25; 40:1; 43:20; 47:6; 51:4, 16; 52:4, 5, 6; 58:1; 63:8; 65:10, 19, 22

Cases where it is most likely Isaiah: 22:4; 26:20 (cf. v 21); 32:13, 18 (cf. v. 15); 53:8 (cf. v. 10);

Another human: 57:14; perhaps the Messiah?

“Fruit of their doings,” 3:10

The expression is twice used with clearly negative sense (Jer 21:14; Mic 7:13); in its other two uses (Jer 17:10; 32:19; excepting Isa 3:10), it is parallel with *drk*, inviting the suggestion that *drk* may refer to the righteous, leaving *m(l* to its usual meaning. But 3:10 is still anomalous, for in the other passages *pry m(l* is a promise of punishment, while in Isa it refers to the more proximate gains of the wicked from their oppression.

“Holy”

Of people: 4:3;

Of Sabbath, 58:13

Elsewhere of God, mostly in the phrase “the Holy One of Israel”

4:5

Makon “dwelling place” is in construct with *har zion*, thus definite, so we should (Jouon-Muraoka 138.e.1) translate “the whole dwelling place of Mount Zion, not “every dwelling place.” Note also disjunctive *zarqa* on “upon.”