



The King and Cornerstone of Zion

3 Prophecies Concerning the
Heavenly City and Our Holy God

Isaiah 2

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Introduction

Where are you going? You might have been asked this question recently. Where are you going on vacation? Where are you going to apply? Where are you going to college? While these questions are appropriate, they are not ultimate. The question I ask you today is where are you going to go when you die? The Bible says there is life after death. Heaven and Hell are real.

A basic truth of Christianity is that those who believe in Jesus go to Heaven. But there are dangers and distractions along the way. We are prone to wander in this world. Some will turn to idols. Some will trust in themselves. How can we be sure we are headed towards Heaven?

Context

The prophet Isaiah has an answer. You might be surprised to see that an Old Testament prophet has something to say to us, since he was before Jesus' time. But our God doesn't change, and his words remain relevant.

Verse 1 says that this is the word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. God is giving a word for Isaiah to see, a prophecy. We're going to break our passage down into three prophecies, and the text says that they concern Judah and Jerusalem. Judah is the people of God, and Jerusalem is the place where God and his people dwell.

With this section of Scripture, Isaiah was looking towards the near future as well as into the far future. The near future speaks of Jesus, and how his first coming inaugurated God's Kingdom. The far future refers to the final fulfillment of all of God's promises, with the second coming of Jesus, his judgment, and complete realization of the Kingdom.

Sermon Preview

We're going to see three prophecies concerning the Heavenly City and our Holy God. I'll show you how Isaiah points to both the near and far future, and how this impacts us today. Let's get started.



1. The Establishment of Zion and God’s People of Peace

Our first prophecy is the establishment of Zion and God’s people of peace. Zion is the name for the city of God. It is associated with Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, where David built the Temple. It is God’s dwelling place, and his people’s home in Heaven. The establishment of Zion means that it is a fixed, firm reality. When Isaiah writes “It shall come to pass in the latter days,” he’s referring to a definite time in the future. All of history is headed towards Zion. Isaiah presents God’s future kingdom because he wants you to be a part of it (NAC).

There’s something special about Zion that we need to notice. While the actual location of physical Jerusalem “stood below the height of the country around [it]” (UTBC), the Zion our prophecy speaks of is on a mountain above the hills. And while it is a Holy City, high and lifted up, it is not lonely. Our text says that all the nations shall flow to it. Many people from all the nations will want to come to Zion to learn from the LORD, to walk in his paths – to learn the right way to live. This lowly place will be lifted up.

*It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and **all the nations** shall flow to it... For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD **from Jerusalem**. (Isaiah 2:2–3)*

Our text says that the law, the word of the LORD will come from Jerusalem. We see a strange picture of people from all the nations, looking like streams that flow upward – and the law of the LORD comes down as well. It’s a special place where people meet with God. It’s a restatement of the promise in Genesis 12, that Abram and God’s people would be so blessed that all other peoples will receive the same blessing (UTBC). This prophecy saw fulfillment in Jesus – and the risen Savior said so himself while explaining it to others on the road to Emmaus:

*...“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day raise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to **all nations**, beginning **from Jerusalem**. (Luke 24:45-47)*

Jesus is the filter and the funnel for everyone who wants to come to Zion. Our passage goes on to say that Zion will be a place of peace, where God will settle disputes and none will say he is unfair or unjust. There will be no war, so swords and spears will be refashioned into farming tools. King Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Jesus is the reason why people from all nations are able to go together to Zion. Jesus started from Jerusalem, and as the Word of God he lights and guides our path. It's easy for us to be distracted and to wander away in the world. We must follow his directions.

Application

So, will you turn away from the world? In verse 5, Isaiah calls us to come and walk in the light of the LORD. This means living a life of holiness, and our passage specifically points out peace.

In the church, God brings people together from all different walks of life. We have different backgrounds, but we share the same worship of Jesus. We really do care about our welcoming ministry in our Youth Service. We care about making newcomers or those who aren't plugged in feel welcomed. But feeling welcomed here in Youth Service is not the end. We want people to feel welcomed because Jesus has welcomed us into Heaven. Welcoming ministry is a way we pursue peace. We urge our leaders to make themselves uncomfortable so that others feel welcomed to come in. Peace comes at a cost. God's children can have peace with others because of Christ's example to us. We were enemies, now adopted into the family of God:

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light... (Ephesians 5:8)

Don't lose the fact that God calls you his children. Peace is a priority for those who are in the family of God. You must pursue peace here at church, at home with your parents and siblings, and in your schools and with the rest of the world. Your ultimate allegiance is towards Jesus, and you must not compromise on truth – but do your best to offer the olive branch of peace.

Our first prophecy is the establishment of Zion and God's people of peace. Zion is a Holy City, a high and lifted up mountain – yet a place where the nations come to meet with God. Those who truly love God will turn away from the world and welcome others as God's people of peace.



2. The Emptiness of Idols and Man's Pursuit of Power

Our second prophecy is the emptiness of idols. Isaiah presents idols – and man's pursuit of power specifically – as a danger and distraction for those who are headed towards Heaven. The word idol translates to good for nothing, worthless. They are useless. They have no purpose. They are empty. Our text today says that God is holy and rejects those who worship idols. Israel had become full of them. They had allowed outsiders to influence them. They worship treasures like silver and gold, they worship the pursuit of power that they found in horses and chariots.

There's a strange irony particularly with man-made idols. God is the ultimate and original Creator - he creates out of nothing and he rightly deserves our worship. But when man tries to make things, we can't create out of nothing. Yet we worship what we worked on with our hands:

*Their land is filled with idols; **they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made.** (Isaiah 2:8)*

Another prophet, Jeremiah, gets this irony. He knows that the gods we make for ourselves are lifeless. They're powerless. They're useless.

*But where are **your gods that you made for yourself?** Let them arise, if they can save you, in your time of trouble; for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah. (Jeremiah 2:28)*

Application

So, will you turn away from idols? The idols of the day were wealth and power. It's fair to say that the gold, silver, horses, and chariots were status symbols. People found these things to be precious. Think of the ways you try to make yourself rich and powerful. Getting good grades, building a brand, showing off your skills, paying attention to your athleticism or attractiveness. These might not be bad things by themselves, but if they take hold of your heart, they will lay waste to your life. It is foolish to think that you can follow them as you head towards Heaven.

When I was younger, we would go to my grandmother's house. On her driveway, she had some white rocks. I remember being fascinated by these white rocks. Why were they so white? Why hadn't I seen them anywhere else? They must be rare. They must be valuable. I took some home and placed

them on my desk. And then one day, I thought to myself, what am I doing?! They're just rocks. I told this story to Jess, and she asked me how old I was when this happened. She laughed at me when I told her it was when I was in high school. She said I should have known better.

We see wealth and power as being precious. But in reality, our idols in this world are as worthless as white rocks. They are dead weight. Even gold will not get you into Heaven. There are no accolades, accomplishments, or achievements that will be acceptable before God. You will not be able to stand. You will be scared, and you will try to flee like bugs in the dust before him. Verse 10 says to hide from the Lord's terror and from the splendor of his majesty. This is a particularly potent prophecy that has eternal implications for those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica, drawing a scary comparison to how Isaiah said people will indeed be hidden away from God's glory and presence, but they will not be safe. They will suffer:

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:8-10)

The worship of idols is so appalling that it is honestly unforgivable. God will humble mankind, each and every one will be brought low before the Lord. Examine your hearts. Confess your idols to God and to others. I challenge you to go to extremes to eliminate your idols. If you worship wealth, start giving your money away. If your idol is success, spend more time studying God's Word. If your idol is your athleticism or attractiveness, give your attention to the weak and unnoticed. If your idols are in the online world of video games or social media, put an end to your online life. True and abundant life comes from treasuring Christ above all else.

Our second prophecy is the emptiness of idols and man's pursuit of power. God is holy and will reject those who worship them, and they will suffer punishment away from his presence. Those who truly love God will turn away from idols and trust in Jesus as their treasure.



3. The Exaltation of God and his Punishment of Pride

Our third prophecy is the exaltation of God and his punishment of pride. While we use idols like wealth and power to cause others to look up at us, pride is a disposition that causes us to look down on others. Isaiah presents pride as a danger and distraction for those who are headed towards Heaven. Our text says that God goes “against” pride. The word against translates to above, upon, and over. Listen to me carefully: God does not go “against” prideful men and idols as if they start on equal ground. That is insulting and disrespectful. God is high and exalted. The word exalt translates to inaccessibly high. He’s on a different level. You can’t touch him.

In our text today, God goes against all the cedars of Lebanon, and the oaks of Bashan. These are strong and towering trees — rich resources for foreign lands. God goes against all the ships of Tarshish, symbols of human craftsmanship and ingenuity. They are representations of man’s ability to make things big and beautiful. And when you think about how God goes against these things, it’s actually judgment language. It’s an indictment against sin:

*And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the **lofty pride of men** shall be brought low, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.
(Isaiah 2:17)*

While God opposes the proud, Christians are called to be salt and light. So instead of Christians going around and asserting physical dominance, we fight on a spiritual level, for the minds and hearts of man:

*We destroy arguments and every **lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God**, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...
(2 Corinthians 10:5)*

Our passage goes on to say that all idols shall utterly pass away. It will be a complete and total purge. There’s a dark picture here of idols made of valuable materials being cast away to the dark caverns and deep cliffs. They throw their idols there so the bats and moles will flee, and so that they might find a place to hide from before the dread and terror of the Lord – from his splendor and his majesty. There will come a day when God will rise, when he gets going to terrorize the earth.

Application

So, will you turn away from pride? You might think that you don't need God. The truth is that we cannot sustain ourselves. Technology and medicine are deceptive. In reality, your days are numbered. God controls your every breath, every heartbeat – and gives you everything you consider to be a blessing in this life. Verse 22 says to stop holding man in such high regard.

What do you pride yourself in? What do you have that causes you to look down on others? Being smart? Musical or athletic skill? Having better looks or loving certain hobbies? Your pride comes out in the way that you speak to others. You belittle them. Your pride also comes out in your actions; You are impatient or rude. And your pride also comes out in your thoughts; You imagine how you would be better and how you would fix or solve the problems. You make yourselves into kings, riding into town and announcing your own glory. God is against you. The apostle Peter says God opposes you, but he also gives you some practical help:

*Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “**God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.**” (1 Peter 5:5)*

Peter says specifically to you who are younger to be subject to the elders. This means to submit, be submissive, render obedience. It means you put yourself in a certain posture, purposefully placing yourself lower than others. Take off your kingly robes and clothe yourself with humility. Have a humble mindset, an orientation of humility towards others. You can't fake this. Remember, God looks at the heart. A truly humble heart affects our attitudes and actions.

I encourage you to have a hunger for humility. I get this phrasing from the concept of fasting. Fasting is the forsaking of food. It is a way to say that we need Jesus. It's an expression of our desperation for him. It is an act of humility — humbling ourselves by saying that we are weak, and we need God more than food. Take this concept of humbling yourself into your everyday life. Will you actively seek out opportunities to serve with your time and talents? Will you have a humble attitude in being the first to seek forgiveness? Will you watch your words and not bring others down, but instead lift others up? And you do all this without causing a scene, but in the quietness of your heart. And if others do take notice, reflect the glory back to God.



Our third and final prophecy is the exaltation of God and his punishment of pride. God is holy and opposes those who are proud, but offers grace to those who are humble in heart. Those who truly love God will turn away from pride and have a hunger for humility.

The Gospel

This point of pride connects directly to the gospel. There's a thread we can trace, in that God gives breath to man - and he also takes it away. Life is a vapor, and you are a mist that vanishes (James 4:14). Why would you put your faith in something so feeble? Even princes, the most popular and powerful, are mere mortal men:

Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish. (Psalm 146:3-4)

None will be able to stand and boast before the Lord. Your pride will prevent you from entering Heaven. None of us are nearly humble enough. We display an attitude of arrogance every day we fail to put God first in our lives. We don't worship him as we should. God's wrath is coming.

But there is a person you can go to. There is a Son of Man where you can find shelter. While our hearts refuse to be humble, there is one who was humble for us.

***For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* (Mark 10:45)**

The Good News is that Jesus, the Son of God, humbled himself on your behalf. He purchased your salvation with his blood by dying on the cross for your sins. When he resurrected, he proclaimed victory over sin and death. If you believe this, you will be saved. Philippians 2:8-11 says that it is Christ's humble obedience that leads to his high exaltation. If your heart has been moved by anything I've said today, please get in touch with me so I can follow up with you.

Summary and Application Questions

In our sermon today, we saw three prophecies concerning the Heavenly City and Our Holy God.

First, we saw the establishment of Zion and God's people of peace. Zion is a Holy City, a high and lifted up mountain – yet a place where the nations come to meet with God. Will you turn away from the world and welcome others as God's people of peace?

Next, we saw the emptiness of idols and man's pursuit of power. God is holy and will reject those who worship them, and they will suffer punishment away from his presence. Will you turn away from idols and trust in Jesus as your treasure?

Finally, we saw the exaltation of God and his punishment of pride. God is holy and opposes those who are proud, but offers grace to those who are humble in heart. Will you turn away from pride and have a hunger for humility?

Conclusion

Let's go back to the beginning for our conclusion and big idea. I asked you: Where are you going? I'm not talking about your summer. I'm not talking about your school. I'm talking about your destiny – where will you go when you die? We are prone to wander in this world. Some will turn to idols that they think are precious. Some will pridefully trust in themselves. How can we be sure we are headed towards Heaven? Two takeaway passages tell us to turn to Jesus, the humble king and precious cornerstone of Zion:

“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” (Matthew 21:5)

Behold and turn to Jesus, the humble king of Zion who is able to break our prideful hearts.

For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” (1 Peter 2:6)

Behold and turn to Jesus, the cornerstone of Zion – chosen and more precious than the idols of this world. If you believe in him, you will not be put to shame.



Big Idea

Here is our big idea for today: Man will be judged, idols will fail, and God alone shall be exalted. Turn to Jesus – the King and cornerstone of Zion.

In Philippians 3, Paul famously wrote that he counts all of his power and pride as rubbish. He counts them as debris. He counts them as a pile of worthless rocks. Paul says something along the lines of not having his own righteousness, but being dressed in Christ’s righteousness alone. He strains forward to what lies ahead of him – he knows where he is going: The goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Our citizenship is in the Holy City.

If you truly trust in Jesus – if you turn away from idols and hold on to him as something more precious than life itself, if you turn away from pride and love him more as your humble king – you can be sure you are headed towards Heaven. Jesus says so himself: “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.” (John 6:37)

King and Cornerstone

We’re headed towards a city
Where people live in peace
The nations come together
And Jesus is the king

We’re headed towards a city
Where idols are exposed
Our hearts are dedicated
And Jesus is the Lord

We’re headed towards a city
Where pride is laid down low
God’s grace goes to the humble
And Jesus is our boast

We’re headed towards a city
Where people live in peace
The nations come together
And Jesus is the king

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