

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Prophecy concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, and the conversion of the Gentile world, Isaiah 2:1-5. Great wickedness and idolatry of the unbelieving Jews, Isaiah 2:6-9. Terrible consternation that will seize the wicked, who shall in vain seek for rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of God in the day of his judgments, Isaiah 2:10-17. Total destruction of idolatry in consequence of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom, Isaiah 2:18-21. An exhortation to put no confidence in man, Isaiah 2:22.

The prophecy contained in the second, third, and fourth chapters, makes one continued discourse. The first five verses of chap. 2 foretell the kingdom of Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles, and their admission into it. From the sixth verse to the end of the second chapter is foretold the punishment of the unbelieving Jews for their idolatrous practices, their confidence in their own strength, and distrust of God's protection; and moreover the destruction of idolatry, in consequence of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom. The whole of the third chapter, with the first verse of the fourth, is a prophecy of the calamities of the Babylonian invasion and captivity; with a particular amplification of the distress of the proud and luxurious daughters of Sion; Isaiah 4:2-6 promises to the remnant, which shall have escaped this severe purgation, a future restoration to the favor and protection of God.

This prophecy was probably delivered in the time of Jotham, or perhaps in that of Uzziah, as Isaiah is said to have prophesied in his reign; to which time not any of his prophecies is so applicable as that of these chapters. The seventh verse of the second, and the latter part of the third chapter, plainly point out times in which riches abounded, and luxury and delicacy prevailed. Plenty of silver and gold could only arise from their commerce; particularly from that part of it which was carried on by the Red Sea. This circumstance seems to confine the prophecy within the limits above mentioned, while the port of Elath was in their hands; it was lost under Ahaz, and never recovered.

Verse 2

In the last days - In the latter days - Wherever the latter times are mentioned in Scripture, the days of the Messiah are always meant, says Kimchi on this place: and, in regard to this place, nothing can be more clear and certain. And the mountain of the Lord's house, says the same author, is Mount Moriah, on which the temple was built. The prophet Micah, Micah 4:1-4, has repeated this prophecy of the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, and of its progress to universality and perfection, in the same words, with little and hardly any material variation: for as he did not begin to prophesy till Jotham's time, and this seems to be one of the first of Isaiah's prophecies, I suppose Micah to have taken it from hence. The variations, as I said, are of no great importance.

Isaiah 2:2. *hu* (hu), after *venissa* (venissa), a word of some emphasis, may be supplied from Micah, if dropped in Isaiah. An ancient MS. has it here in the margin. It has in like manner been lost in Isaiah 53:4 (note), and in Psalm 22:29, where it is supplied by the Syriac, and Septuagint. Instead of *col haggoyim* (col haggoyim), all the nations, Micah has only *ammim* (ammim), peoples; where the Syriac has *col ammin* (col ammin), all peoples, as probably it ought to be.

Isaiah 2:3. For the second *el* (el), read *veel* (veel), seventeen MSS., one of my own, ancient, two editions, the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, Chaldee, and so Micah, Micah 4:2.

Isaiah 2:4. Micah adds *ad rachok* (ad rachok), afar off, which the Syriac also reads in this parallel place of Isaiah. It is also to be observed that Micah has improved the passage by adding a verse, or sentence, (Micah 4:4) for imagery and expression worthy even of the elegance of Isaiah: -

And they shall sit every man under his vine,

And under his fig tree, and none shall affright them:

For the mouth of Jehovah, God of hosts, hath spoken it.

The description of well established peace, by the image of *beating their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks,* is very poetical. The Roman poets have employed the same image, Martial, 14:34. *Falx ex ense.*

Pax me certa ducis placidos curvavit in usus:

Agricolae nunc sum; militis ante fui.

Sweet peace has transformed me. I was once the property of the soldier, and am now the property of the husbandman.

The prophet Joel, Joel 3:10, hath reversed it, and applied it to war prevailing over peace: -

Beat your ploughshares into swords,

And your pruning-hooks into spears.

And so likewise the Roman poets: -

- Non ullus aratro

Dignus honos: squalent abductis arva colonis,

Et curvae rigidum falces conflantur in ensem.

Virg., Georg. 1:506.

“Agriculture has now no honor: the husbandmen being taken away to the wars, the fields are overgrown with weeds, and the crooked sickles are straightened into swords.”

Bella diu tenere viros: erat aptior ensis

Vomere: cedebat taurus arator equo

Sarcula cessabant; versique in pila ligones;

Factaque de rastro pondere cassis erat.

Ovid, Fast. 1:697.

“War has lasted long, and the sword is preferred to the plough. The bull has given place to the war-horse; the weeding-hooks to pikes; and the harrow-pins have been manufactured into helmets.”

The prophet Ezekiel, Ezekiel 17:22-24, has presignified the same great event with equal clearness, though in a more abstruse form, in an allegory; from an image, suggested by the former part of the prophecy, happily introduced, and well pursued: -

“Thus saith the Lord Jehovah:

I myself will take from the shoot of the lofty cedar,

Even a tender scion from the top of his scions will I pluck off:

And I myself will plant it on a mountain high and eminent.

On the lofty mountain of Israel will I plant it;

And it shall exalt its branch, and bring forth fruit,

And it shall become a majestic cedar:

And under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing;

In the shadow of its branches shall they dwell:

And all the trees of the field shall know,

That I Jehovah have brought low the high tree;

Have exalted the low tree;

Have dried up the green tree;

And have made the dry tree to flourish:

I Jehovah have spoken it, and will do it.”

The word vayonek (venathatti), in this passage, Ezekiel 17:22, as the sentence now stands, appears incapable of being reduced to any proper construction or sense. None of the ancient versions acknowledge it, except Theodotion, and the Vulgate; and all but the latter vary very much from the present reading of this clause. Houbigant’s correction of the passage, by reading instead of vayonek (venathatti), vayonek (veyoneketh), and a tender scion which is not very unlike it, perhaps better vayonek (veyonek), with which the adjective rach will agree without alteration - is ingenious and probable; and I have adopted it in the above translation. - L.

Verse 3

To the house - The conjunction vay (vau) is added by nineteen of Kennicott’s, thirteen of De Rossi’s MSS., one of my own, and two editions, the Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, Arabic, and some copies of the Targum; And to the house. It makes the sentence more emphatic.

He will teach us of his ways - Unless God grant a revelation of his will, what can we know?

We will walk in his paths - Unless we purpose to walk in the light, of what use can that light be to us?

For out of Zion shall go forth the law - In the house of God, and in his ordinances only can we expect to hear the pure doctrines of revelation preached.

1. God alone can give a revelation of his own will.

2. We must use the proper means in order to know this will.

3. We should know it in order to do it.

4. We should do it in order to profit by it.

5. He who will not walk in the light when God vouchsafes it, shall be shut up in everlasting darkness.

6. Every man should help his neighbor to attain that light, life, and felicity: Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Verse 4

Neither shall they learn war any more - If wars are necessary, how deep must that fall be that renders them so! But what a reproach to humanity is the trade of war! Men are regularly instructed in it, as in any of the necessary arts. How to dislodge most souls from their frail shrines By bomb, sword, ball, and bayonet, is the art Which some call great and glorious! And is this a necessary part of a finished education in civilized society? O Earth! Earth! Earth!

Verse 6

They be replenished And they multiply - Seven MSS. and one edition, for yaspiku, read yaspichu, and have joined themselves to the children of strangers; that is, in marriage or worship. - Dr. Jubb. So Vulg., adhaeserunt. Compare Isaiah 14:1. But the very learned professor Chevalier Michaelis has explained the word yesupachu, Job 30:7, (German translation, note on the place), in another manner; which perfectly well agrees with that place, and perhaps will be found to give as good a sense here. saphiach, the noun, means corn springing up, not from the seed regularly sown on cultivated land, but in the untilled field, from the scattered grains of the former harvest. This, by an easy metaphor, is applied to a spurious brood of children irregularly and casually begotten. The Septuagint seem to have understood the verb here in this sense, reading it as the Vulgate seems to have done. This justifies their version, which it is hard to account for in any other manner: ... Compare Hosea 5:7, and the Septuagint there. But instead of ubeyaldehy, and in the children, two of Kennicott's and eight of De Rossi's MSS. have ucheyaldehy, and as the children. And they sin impudently as the children of strangers. See De Rossi.

And are soothsayers They are filled with diviners - Hebrews They are filled from the east; or more than the east. The sentence is manifestly imperfect. The Septuagint, Vulgate, and Chaldee, seem to have read kemikkedem; and the latter, with another word before it, signifying idols; they are filled with idols as from of old. Houbigant, for mikkedem, reads mikkesem, as Brentius had proposed long ago. I rather think that both words together give us the true reading: mikkedem, mikkesem, with divination from the east; and that the first word has been by mistake omitted, from its similitude to the second.

Verse 7

Their land is also full of horses And his land is filled with horses - This was in direct contradiction to God's command in the law: But he (the king) shall not multiply horses to himself; nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. Deuteronomy 17:16, Deuteronomy 17:17. Uzziah seems to have followed the example of Solomon, see 1 Kings 10:26-29, who first transgressed in these particulars; he recovered the port of Elath on the Red Sea, and with it that commerce which in Solomon's days had made silver and gold as plenteous at Jerusalem as stones. 2 Chronicles 1:15. He had an army of 307,500 men, in which, as we may infer from the testimony of Isaiah, the chariots and horse made a considerable part. The law above mentioned was to be a standing trial of prince and people, whether they had trust and confidence in God their deliverer. See Bp. Sherlock's Discourses on Prophecy. Dissert. iv., where he has excellently explained the reason and effect of the law, and the influence which the observance or neglect of it had on the affairs of the Israelites.

Verse 8

Their land also is full of idols And his land is filled with idols - Uzziah and Fotham are both said, 2 Kings 15:3, 2 Kings 15:4, 2 Kings 15:34, 2 Kings 15:35, to have done that which was right in the sight of the Lord; that is, to have adhered to and maintained the legal worship of God, in opposition to idolatry and all irregular worship; for to this sense the meaning of that phrase is commonly to be restrained; save that the high places were not removed where the people still sacrificed and burned incense. There was hardly any time when they were quite free from this irregular and unlawful practice, which they seem to have looked upon as very consistent with the true worship of God; and which seems in some measure to have been tolerated, while the tabernacle was removed from place to place, and before the temple was built. Even after the conversion of Manasseh, when he had removed the strange gods, commanded Judah to serve Jehovah the God of Israel, it is added, Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still on the high places, yet unto Jehovah their God only. 2 Chronicles 33:17. The worshipping on the high places therefore does not necessarily imply

idolatry; and from what is said of these two kings, Uzziah and Jotham, we may presume that the public exercise of idolatrous worship was not permitted in their time. The idols therefore here spoken of must have been such as were designed for a private and secret use. Such probably were the teraphim so often mentioned in Scripture; a kind of household gods, of human form, as it should seem, (see 1 Samuel 19:13 (note), and compare Genesis 31:34 (note)), of different magnitude, used for idolatrous and superstitious purposes, particularly for divination, and as oracles, which they consulted for direction in their affairs.

Verse 9

Boweth down - "Shall be bowed down" - This has reference to the preceding verse. They bowed themselves down to their idols, therefore shall they be bowed down and brought low under the avenging hand of God.

Therefore forgive them not - "And thou wilt not forgive them." - L.

Verse 10

When he ariseth to strike the earth with terror - On the authority of the Septuagint, confirmed by the Arabic and an ancient MS., I have added here to the text a line, which in the 19th and 21st verses (Isaiah 2:19, Isaiah 2:21) is repeated together with the preceding line, and has, I think, evidently been omitted by mistake in this place. The MS. here varies only in one letter from the reading of the other two verses; it has **בַּיָּמִים** (baarets), instead of **בַּיָּמִיִּם** (haarets). None of De Rossi's MSS. confirm this addition. The line added is, **When he ariseth to strike the earth with terror.**

Verse 11

Be humbled - "shaphel veshach", read **שַׁפְּחֵל שַׁח** (shaphelu shach). - Dr. Durell. Which rectifies the grammatical construction. No MS. or version confirms this reading.

Verses 13-16

And upon all the cedars - "Even against all the cedars" - Princes, potentates, rulers, captains, rich men, etc. - So Kimchi. These verses afford us a striking example of that peculiar way of writing, which makes a principal characteristic of the parabolical or poetical style of the Hebrews, and in which the prophets deal so largely, namely, their manner of exhibiting things Divine, spiritual, moral, and political, by a set of images taken from things natural, artificial, religious, historical, in the way of metaphor or allegory. Of these nature furnishes much the largest and the most pleasing share; and all poetry has chiefly recourse to natural images, as the richest and most powerful source of illustration. But it may be observed of the Hebrew poetry in particular, that in the use of such images, and in the application of them in the way of illustration and ornament, it is more regular and constant than any other poetry whatever; that it has for the most part a set of images appropriated in a manner to the explication of certain subjects. Thus you will find, in many other places besides this before us, that cedars of Lebanon and oaks of Bashan, are used in the way of metaphor and allegory for kings, princes, potentates of the highest rank; high mountains and lofty hills, for kingdoms, republics, states, cities; towers and fortresses, for defenders and protectors, whether by counsel or strength, in peace or war; ships of Tarshish and works of art, and invention employed in adorning them, for merchants, men enriched by commerce, and abounding in all the luxuries and elegances of life, such as those of Tyre and Sidon; for it appears from the course of the whole passage, and from the train of ideas, that the fortresses and the ships are to be taken metaphorically, as well as the high trees and the lofty mountains.

Ships of Tarshish - Are in Scripture frequently used by a metonymy for ships in general, especially such as are employed in carrying on traffic between distant countries, as Tarshish was the most celebrated mart of those times, frequented of old by the Phoenicians, and the principal source of wealth to Judea and the neighboring countries. The learned seem now to be perfectly well agreed that Tarshish is Tartessus, a city of Spain, at the mouth of the river Baetis, whence the Phoenicians, who first opened this trade, brought silver and gold, (Jeremiah 10:9; Ezekiel 27:12), in which that country then abounded; and, pursuing their voyage still farther to the Cassiterides, (Bogart, Canaan, 1 c. 39; Huet, Hist. de Commerce, p. 194), the islands of Scilly and Cornwall, they brought from thence lead and tin.

Tarshish is celebrated in Scripture, 2 Chronicles 8:17, 2 Chronicles 8:18; 2 Chronicles 9:21, for the trade which Solomon carried on thither, in conjunction with the Tyrians. Jehoshaphat, 1 Kings 22:48; 2 Chronicles 20:36, attempted afterwards to renew their trade. And from the account given of his attempt it appears that his fleet was to sail to Ezion-geber on the Red Sea; they must therefore have designed to sail round Africa, as Solomon's fleet had done before, (see Huet, Histoire de Commerce, p. 32), for it was a three years' voyage, (2 Chronicles 9:21), and they brought gold from Ophir, probably on the coast of Arabia; silver from Tartessus; and ivory, apes, and peacocks, from Africa. **אֲפִרִי** (Afri), Africa, the Roman termination, Africa terra. **תַּרְשִׁישׁ** (Tarshish), some city or country in Africa. So the Chaldee on 1 Kings 22:49, where it renders **אֲפִרִי** (Tarshish) by **אֲפִרְחַי** (Aphricah); and compare 2 Chronicles 20:36, from whence it appears,

to go to Ophir and to Tarshish is one and the same thing. - Dr. Jubb.

It is certain that under Pharaoh Necho, about two hundred years afterwards, this voyage was made by the Egyptians; Herodot. 4:42. They sailed from the Red Sea, and returned by the Mediterranean, and they performed it in three years, just the same time that the voyage under Solomon had taken up. It appears likewise from Pliny, Nat. Hist., 2:67, that the passage round the Cape of Good Hope was known and frequently practiced before his time, by Hanno, the Carthaginian, when Carthage was in its glory; by one Eudoxus, in the time of Ptolemy Lathyrus, king of Egypt; and Coelus Antipater, a historian of good credit, somewhat earlier than Pliny, testifies that he had seen a merchant who had made the voyage from Gades to Ethiopia. The Portuguese under Vasco de Gama, near three hundred years ago, recovered this navigation, after it had been intermitted and lost for many centuries. - L.

Verse 18

Shall utterly abolish - Shall disappear - The ancient versions and an ancient MS. read $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x} - \text{x}\text{œ}\text{x}\text{q}\text{x}$ (yachalpu), plural. One of my MSS. reads $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x} - \text{x}\text{œ}\text{x}\text{*}\text{x}\text{f}$ (yachaloph), probably a mistake for $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x} - \text{x}\text{œ}\text{x}\text{q}\text{x}$ (yachalpu).

Verses 19-21

Into the holes of the rocks - Into caverns of rocks - The country of Judea being mountainous and rocky, is full of caverns, as appears from the history of David's persecution under Saul. At En-gedi, in particular, there was a cave so large that David with six hundred men hid themselves in the sides of it; and Saul entered the mouth of the cave without perceiving that any one was there, 1 Samuel 24. Josephus, Antiq., lib. xiv., c. 15, and Bell. Jud., lib. 1, c. 16, tells us of a numerous gang of banditti, who, having infested the country, and being pursued by Herod with his army retired into certain caverns almost inaccessible, near Arbela in Galilee, where they were with great difficulty subdued. Some of these were natural, others artificial. - Beyond Damascus, says Strabo, lib. xvi., are two mountains called Trachones, from which the country has the name of Trachonitis; and from hence towards Arabia and Iturea, are certain rugged mountains, in which there are deep caverns, one of which will hold four thousand men. - Tavernier, Voyage de Perse, part ii., chap. 4, speaks of a grot, between Aleppo and Bir, that would hold near three thousand horse. - Three hours distant from Sidon, about a mile from the sea, there runs along a high rocky mountain, in the sides of which are hewn a multitude of grots, all very little differing from each other. They have entrances about two feet square: on the inside you find in most or all of them a room of about four yards square. There are of these subterraneous caverns two hundred in number. It may, with probability at least, be concluded that these places were contrived for the use of the living, and not of the dead. Strabo describes the habitations of the Troglodytae to have been somewhat of this kind. - Maundrell, p. 118. The Horites, who dwelt in Mount Seir, were Troglodytae, as their name $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}$ (horim), imports. But those mentioned by Strabo were on each side of the Arabian gulf. Mohammed (Koran, chap. 15 xxvi.) speaks of a tribe of Arabians, the tribe of Thamud, who hewed houses out of the mountains, to secure themselves. - Thus, because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves and strong holds, Judges 6:2. To these they betook themselves for refuge in times of distress and hostile invasion: - When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, for the people were distressed, then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits, 1 Samuel 13:6, and see Jeremiah 41:9. Therefore to enter into the rock, to go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, was to them a very proper and familiar image to express terror and consternation. The prophet Hosea, Hosea 10:8, hath carried the same image farther, and added great strength and spirit to it:

They shall say to the mountains, Cover us;
And to the hills, Fall on us;

which image, together with these of Isaiah, is adopted by the sublime author of the Revelation, Revelation 6:15, Revelation 6:16, who frequently borrows his imagery from our prophet. - L.

Verse 20

Which they made each one for himself to worship - Which they have made to worship - The word $\text{x}\text{œ}\text{x}$ (lo), for himself, is omitted by two ancient MSS., and is unnecessary. It does not appear that any copy of the Septuagint has it, except MS. Pachom, and MS. 1. D. II., and they have $\text{á}\frac{1}{4}\text{í}\text{í}\text{...}\text{í}\text{,}\text{í}\text{í}\text{í}$, $\text{x}\text{œ}\text{x}$ (lahem), to themselves.

To the moles - They shall carry their idols with them into the dark caverns, old ruins, or desolate places, to which they shall flee for refuge; and so shall give them up, and relinquish them to the filthy animals that frequent such places, and have taken possession of them as their proper habitation. Bellonias, Greaves, P. Lucas, and many other travelers, speak of bats of an enormous size, as inhabiting the Great Pyramid. See Harmer, Obs., vol. ii., 455. Three MSS. express $\text{x} - \text{x}\text{q}\text{x} - \text{x}\text{q}\text{x} - \text{x}\text{*}\text{x}^{\text{a}}$ (chapharperoth), the moles as one word.

Verse 22

Cease ye from man - Trust neither in him, nor in the gods that he has invented. Neither he, nor they, can either save or destroy.