

General Comments on Isaiah 2-5

The text of these four chapters form Isaiah's charge against his own nation. The society they presently live in is contrasted with the society they should have. They are presently not enjoying peace and prosperity because they are not a theocracy. A theocratic Zion is at some point in the future (2:2-4). Why is it in the future and not now? Because Israel, and more specifically Jerusalem, is adulterated by the world instead of leading the Gentile nations to the Lord (2:5-9). The result is the Lord will punish them for their pride and idolatry (2:10-27). Their society has degraded and become entirely corrupt, so the Lord afflicts them and dismantles their society (3:1-4:1). Their society is replaced by the cleansed society of Zion (4:2-6). Isaiah then generally (5:1-7) and specifically (5:8-30) details the sins of the people at Jerusalem and informs them how they will be punished.

The core of Isaiah's accusation is Jerusalem is presently not Zion. And, it will not be Zion until the Lord destroys man's corrupt societies and rules over the earth Himself. Why can't we establish Zion? Because we are doing the same things listed in 2:5-4:1.

The text is largely the writing of Isaiah inspired by either a vision or a direct conversation with the Lord. Unlike the events of ch. 6, we are left uninformed as to the method of inspiration. Regardless, Isaiah relates the substance of the message given to him, and includes a series of quotations of the Lord (cf. 3:14-15, 3:16-17, 5:3-6, 5:9-10) to make it clear what he is writing is from the Lord and not himself.

General Comments on Isaiah 2

KJV Isaiah 2

1 THE word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, [that] the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his

JPS Isaiah 2

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

²In the days to come,
The Mount of the LORD's House
Shall stand firm above the mountains
And tower above the hills;
And all the nations
Shall gaze on it with joy.
³And the many peoples shall go and say:
"Come,
Let us go up to the Mount of the LORD,
To the House of the God of Jacob;

ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

6 Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and [are] soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. 7 Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither [is there any] end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither [is there any] end of their chariots: 8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: 9 And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.

10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. 11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 12 For the day of the LORD of hosts [shall be] upon every [one that is] proud and lofty, and upon every [one that is] lifted up; and he shall be brought low: 13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, [that are] high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, 14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills [that are] lifted up, 15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, 16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish,

That He may instruct us in His ways, And that we may walk in His paths.” For instruction shall come forth from Zion, The word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴Thus He will judge among the nations And arbitrate for the many peoples, And they shall beat their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not take up Sword against nation; They shall never again know war.

⁵O House of Jacob! Come, let us walk By the light of the LORD. ⁶For you have forsaken [the ways of] your people, O House of Jacob! For they are full [of practices] from the East, And of soothsaying like the Philistines; They abound in customs of the aliens. ⁷Their land is full of silver and gold, There is no limit to their treasures; Their land is full of horses, There is no limit to their chariots. ⁸And their land is full of idols; They bow down to the work of their hands, To what their own fingers have wrought. ⁹But man shall be humbled, And mortal brought low— Oh, do not forgive them!

¹⁰Go deep into the rock, Bury yourselves in the ground, Before the terror of the LORD And His dread majesty! ¹¹Man’s haughty look shall be brought low, And the pride of mortals shall be humbled. None but the LORD shall be Exalted in that day.

¹²For the LORD of Hosts has ready a day Against all that is proud and arrogant, Against all that is lofty—so that it is brought low: ¹³Against all the cedars of Lebanon, Tall and stately, And all the oaks of Bashan; ¹⁴Against all the high mountains And all the lofty hills; ¹⁵Against every soaring tower And every mighty wall; ¹⁶Against all the ships of Tarshish And all the gallant barks.

and upon all pleasant pictures.
 17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.
 18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish. 19 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. 22 Cease ye from man, whose breath [is] in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

¹⁷Then man's haughtiness shall be humbled
 And the pride of man brought low.
 None but the LORD shall be
 Exalted in that day.

¹⁸As for idols, they shall vanish completely.
¹⁹And men shall enter caverns in the rock
 And hollows in the ground—
 Before the terror of the LORD
 And His dread majesty,
 When He comes forth to overawe the earth.

²⁰On that day, men shall fling away,
 To the flying foxes and the bats,
 The idols of silver
 And the idols of gold
 Which they made for worshiping.
²¹And they shall enter the clefts in the rocks
 And the crevices in the cliffs,
 Before the terror of the LORD
 And His dread majesty,
 When He comes forth to overawe the earth.

²²Oh, cease to glorify man,
 Who has only a breath in his nostrils!
 For by what does he merit esteem?

The text of this chapter focuses primarily on human pride. It starts with an appeal to establish Zion (v. 2-4), which those at Jerusalem have clearly failed at. Isaiah pleades with his people to walk in the ways of the Lord (v. 5), implying the reason they are not living in Zion is because they are not walking in the ways of the Lord. Instead, the people are filled with pride, the love of self (v. 22). They do as they please, worshiping things they make with their own hands (v. 5-8). The result is on the Day of Reckoning the Lord is forced to humble them and cast down all of the edifices of human pride (v. 9-21).

While the text of v. 2-4 can be read as an inspiring look to a future idyllic society, in this context it is more of an accusation. People are entirely too filled with pride to create such a society, so the Lord must purge us of our arrogance and selfishness to create such a society (cf. 4:2-6).

The LDS community has developed a set of interpretations on verses 2-3 of this chapter which are rather provincial. A common LDS reading of v. 2 is it is specifically referring to the Salt Lake temple. This line of reasoning is argued because of its prominence in Mormonism and its location among mountains. An additional argument is based on the word "utah", which is a Navajo/Ute word meaning "upper" or "higher". The Rocky Mountains

are seen as great mountains and the Salt Lake temple is built in them as the "higher/upper/top" mountain, the mountain of the Lord.

Some early LDS commentators interpreted the first two lines of v. 3 to be referring to the pioneers gathering at Utah.

Some see the last two lines of v. 3 referencing "Zion" and "Jerusalem" as being two different places. Then, the first Zion can be Salt Lake City and the other is Jerusalem. Such an interpretation is problematic as the text is better arranged as a synthetical parallelism:

For instruction shall come forth from Zion
The word of the Lord from Jerusalem

where instruction=word of the Lord and Zion=Jerusalem. Saying Zion and Jerusalem in these verses are two different places breaks the synthetical equation implied by the context of the verse.

While there are various early and contemporary LDS Church leaders and commentators who forward these positions, there are many who do not. There is no consensus on the interpretation of these two verses. See Monte Nyman's comments on these verses in Great are the Words of Isaiah for a thorough review of General Authority comments on this passage.

Given the blatant Millennial setting of v. 2-4, attempting to say these verses refer specifically to the Salt Lake temple or the initial gathering to the Salt Lake valley is problematic at best. While they may be a type of theocracy, Zionism, and the millennial gathering to Zion, they cannot be the ultimate fulfillment of this passage given the events detailed in v. 4 which clearly have not come to pass.

Specific Comments on Isaiah 2

Note: This chapter appears in 2 Ne. 12.

The text of this chapter can be arranged as follows:

Introduction (v. 1-2d)

- A - (v. 2e-f) The joy of the nations
- B - (v. 3a-d) The nations go to the Lord's House
- C - (v. 3e-f) That He may lead us
- D - (v. 3g) Instruction from Zion
- D - (v. 3h) Word from Jerusalem
- C - (v. 4a-b) That He may judge us
- B - (v. 4c-d) The nations change from war to peace
- A - (v. 4e-g) Nations lay down their swords

- A - (v. 5) Let us walk in the light of the Lord.
- B - (v. 6) House of Jacob is full of practices from the East
- C - (v. 7-8) Their land is full of silver and gold
- D - (v. 9-10) Man humbled before terror of the Lord
- E - (v. 11) Man brought low, only Lord exalted
- F - (v. 12) Lord of Hosts has ready a day against all that is proud
- F - (v. 13-15) Against the cedars of Lebanon, high mountains, ships of Tarshish
- E - (v. 17) Man humbled, none but Lord exalted
- D - (v. 19) Men enter caverns before terror of Lord
- C - (v. 20) Men shall cast away idols of silver and of gold
- B - (v. 21) They shall enter clefts in the rocks before the Lord
- A - (v. 22) Cease to glorify man

1 THE word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem

v1 An introduction wherein the target audience is explicitly identified, also done in 3:1 and 5:7. Isaiah wants to make it clear to his people that he is speaking to them.

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, [that] the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

v2 For the KJV "that the mountains of the Lord's house...", the BofM has "when the mountains of the Lord's house...".

In the book of Isaiah, mountains can figuratively refer to nations or kingdoms, cf. 64:1-3, also cp. Jer. 51:24 where Babylon is called a mountain. Here, the Mount of the Lord's House is clearly referring to a temple, cp. 56:5-7, 60:7, 66:1, 66:20. The question is, "Which temple is this passage referring to?" There is no uniformity of interpretation among Church leaders on this passage.

The primary contextual interpretation is the passage is referring to the millennial temple established at Jerusalem (cf. Ezek. 37:24-28). A secondary acontextual interpretation is the temple at Independence, MO (cf. D&C 57:1-3). The temple at Salt Lake City, and other current temples as well the former Kirtland and Nauvoo temples, can be taken as types and forerunners of

Millennial temples and of this great temple at Jerusalem.

Additionally supporting the temple at Jerusalem being the primary contextual interpretation, D&C 133:12-13 uses similar language while explicitly referencing Judah at Jerusalem:

12 Let them, therefore, who are among the Gentiles flee unto Zion. 13 And let them who be of Judah flee unto Jerusalem, unto the mountains of the Lord's house.

Also, note in the passage above Judah is warned to flee to the "mountains of the Lord's house", mountains being plural, and not the "Lord's house". This suggests there will not be a temple proper for Judah to flee to at the time of the Day of the Lord. That temple would presumably be constructed in a Millennial setting.

Gileadi provides an interpretation on this verse that it can mean Israel is to be the head of all nations. Meaning the temple is to be established as the top of all nations because in a theocracy the Lord's House would be the seat of government. This reading is easily supported by ch. 60.

v3 In the Millennium (cf. 14:1-2, 16:1, 54:2-3. 60:3-12) all people of all nations will acknowledge the Lord is God and worship Him in the temple.

v4 A millennial reference of a classical covenant blessing of peace and bounty for everyone. Contrast Isaiah's "beating of the plowshares" with Joel's (Joel 3:10) where the exact opposite is occurring. The absolute lack of warfare forces a Millennial interpretation, as the entire context of the events leading up to the Day of the Lord is "wars and rumors of wars".

5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD. 6 Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and [are] soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. 7 Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither [is there any] end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither [is there any] end of their chariots: 8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made:

v5 The BofM rendering is identical to the KJV, and then adds "Yea, come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways." This verse is a general call to repentance that precedes a series of accusation of idolatry (v. 6-8). It is interesting to note all of the subsequent accusations in v. 6-8 are behaviors explicitly prohibited in the Law of Moses. Thus, Isreal is deliberately and willfully rebelling against the Law.

v6 "Philistines", use of this term is pejorative as the Philistines did not practice circumcision. Israel has rebelled against the Lord and rejected the Abrahamic covenant, symbolized by uncircumcision, thereby becoming like all other nations of the earth. Soothsayers, diviners, mediums and spiritists in general are forbidden among Israel by the Law, cf. Deut. 18:9-13.

v7 "horses", "chariots", symbols of warfare, cp. 31:1, Deut. 17:16. They love warfare, its spoils, and the power military might brings. As a form of idolatry cf. Dan. 11:36-39 where the king of the north honors the god of fortresses. But, most importantly, kings of Israel are prohibited from multiplying horses and chariots unto themselves in Deut. 17:16, which they do irrespective, cp. 1 Kings 10:26-29.

v8 An idol is anything a man creates with his own hands and adores, cp. 17:8. This kind of materialistic idolatry, both literal and figurative, is repeatedly forbidden in the Law, cf. Deut. 4.

9 And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not. 10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. 11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 12 For the day of the LORD of hosts [shall be] upon every [one that is] proud and lofty, and upon every [one that is] lifted up; and he shall be brought low:

13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, [that are] high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, 14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills [that are] lifted up, 15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, 16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. 17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish. 19 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.

v9-21 The Lord strikes down arrogant men (v. 9-12), the edifices of their pride (v. 13-17), and their false gods (v. 18-21). On that day, the Lord alone will be exalted (v. 11, 17, 19).

v9 For the KJV "the great man humbleth himself", the BofM has "the great man humbleth himself not".

Determining the meaning of this verse is problematic as its translation varies a great deal (when not using the BofM version). Aside from the BofM version, a variety of good readings can be developed for this verse and all are applicable and in context:

BofM (2 Ne. 12:9)

And the mean man boweth not down,
and the great man humbleth himself not,
therefore, forgive him not.

Men do not humble themselves before the Lord, so do not forgive them.

KJV

And the mean man boweth down,
and the great man humbleth himself:
therefore forgive them not.

Men bow down to idols and not the Lord, so do not forgive them.

Gileadi

Mankind is brought low
when men thus debase themselves.
Forbear them not!

Men are brought low when they debase themselves by worshipping idols, so don't tolerate it.

JPS

But man shall be humbled,
And mortal brought low--
Oh, do not forgive them!
[suggested emendation on last line,
"And their idols with them"]

NAS

So the [common] man has been humbled,
And the man [of importance] has been abased,
But do not forgive them.

The Lord shall humble the idolatrous men by punishing them and they shall not be forgiven because they didn't repent.

The forced humiliation of these arrogant men is presented in 5:15, which complicates the interpretation of the present passage. Ignoring 5:15 the BofM reading is the most internally consistent as people who remain in their pride are not forgiven. However, given the context of a forced humiliation, the reading forwarded by the JPS and NAS is tenable as their humiliation is forced and not an act of contrition, so they are not forgiven.

v10 This verse contrasts the lowliness of wicked men with the exalted Lord. The wicked men will hide in the ground or go down into the pit/hell, cp. 14:15, 14:19.

The BofM differs from the KJV:

KJV

Enter into the rock,
and hide thee in the dust,
for fear of the Lord,
and for the glory of his majesty.

BofM

O ye wicked ones,
enter into the rock,
and hide thee in the dust,
for the fear of the Lord
and the glory of his majesty
shall smite thee.

On the BofM rendering, the last line references the glory of Lord smiting the wicked. God's presence is something fearful for the wicked because He is just and must mete out retribution, cp. Exod. 33:3-5.

Paul and John appear to be paraphrasing this verse in 1 Thes. 1:7-9, Rev. 6:15-16.

v12-17 An attack on those who rest their hopes in their own accomplishments and in the arm of flesh. The arrogant reject the Lord in favor of their own works because they believe their buildings, and ships, and fortresses are mighty. On the Day of the Lord, He will knock them down and reveal men's arrogance.

v12-14 The BofM additions to the text emphasize the universal nature of the Day of the Lord. In all three verses the additions specifically state all nations, all proud people, will be smitten. The idea that one will be spared because they are not at Jerusalem is exactly what these verses are refuting. The Day of the Lord is not simply to punish the proud at Jerusalem, it is to punish all the prideful.

v12 "day", the Day of the Lord is detailed by Joel (Joel 2:1-11).

The BofM differs from the KJV:

KJV

For the day of the Lord of hosts

BofM

For the day of the Lord of Hosts

shall be upon every one	soon cometh upon all nations,
	yea, upon every one;
that is proud and lofty,	yea, upon the proud and lofty,
and upon every one	and upon every one
that is lifted up;	who is lifted up,
and he shall be brought low:	and he shall be brought low.

v13 Lebanon and Bashan represent the elite among Israel. The cedars and oaks referenced are the loftiest trees in the Middle East and represent pride and self-aggrandizement, compare 37:24 and Jacob 5:48.

The BofM differs from the KJV:

<u>KJV</u>	<u>BofM</u>
And upon all	Yea, and the day of the Lord
the cedars of Lebanon,	shall come upon all
that are high and lifted up,	the cedars of Lebanon,
and upon all the oaks of Bashan.	for they are high and lifted up;
	and upon all the oaks of Bashan;

v14 The BofM differs from the KJV:

<u>KJV</u>	<u>BofM</u>
And upon all the high mountains,	And upon all the high mountains,
and upon all the hills	and upon all the hills,
	and upon all the nations
[that are] lifted up,	which are lifted up,
	and upon every people;

v15 "tower", recalling Tower of Babel imagery.

"mighty wall", this represents the prideful institutions of men, compare 5:2-6, 30:13 and Deut. 28:52. See also 1 Ne. 11:35 and 1 Ne. 12:18 where the great and spacious building from Lehi's dream is called the "wisdom of the world."

v16 Intricate trade based economies sustain the materialistic societies of these arrogant men. Trading also occurs with Gentile nations thus providing a method of transmission of the Gentile traditions to Israel, as well as encouraging arm of flesh dealings with these nations, cp. 31:1.

"ships of Tarshish", given the context of human pride and rebellion, this might be a reference to Jonah's rebellion when he fled from the Lord's calling via a ship of Tarshish, cf. Jonah 1:3. More likely it is derived from passages where ships are means of obtaining fabulous wealth and political power (cf. 1 Kings 9:26-28, 1 Kings 10:22, 1 Kings 22:4-8, 2 Chron. 8:18, 2 Chron. 20:36-37). In the case of Solomon, commerce and political liasons via shipping led to his downfall.

Regarding the composition of this verse, Sydney B. Sperry in his book The Voice of Israel's Prophets, pp. 90-91 (Deseret, 1965) states:

In 2 Nephi 12:16 (cf. Isaiah 2:16) the Book of Mormon has a reading of remarkable interest. It prefixes a phrase of eight words not found in the Hebrew or King James versions. Since the ancient Septuagint (Greek) version concurs with the added phrase in the Book of Mormon, let us exhibit the reading of the Book of Mormon (BofM), the King James Version (KJV), and the Septuagint (LXX) as follows:

BofM	And upon all the ships of the sea,
KJV	
LXX	And upon every ship of the sea,
BofM	and upon all the ships of Tarshish
KJV	And upon all the ships of Tarshish
LXX	
BofM	and upon all pleasant pictures.
KJV	and upon all pleasant pictures.
LXX	and upon every display of fine ships.

The Book of Mormon suggests that the original text of this verse contained three phrases, all of which commenced with the same opening words, "and upon all." By a common accident, the original Hebrew (and hence the King James) text lost the first phrase, which was, however, preserved by the Septuagint. The latter lost the second phrase and seems to have corrupted the third phrase. The Book of Mormon preserved all three phrases. Scholars may suggest that Joseph Smith took the first phrase from the Septuagint. The prophet did not know Greek, and there is no evidence that he had access to a copy of the Septuagint in 1829-30 when he translated the Book of Mormon.

v18-21 A classically styled synthetical parallelism. The repeated A-B-A-B pattern serves to establish it as an emphatic. In Hebrew there are no modifiers like "very" or "most" as in English. In Hebrew you would repeat the word or statement twice to form an emphatic and three times to form a superlative. The pattern is:

A (v. 18) - Idols
B (v. 19) - cast into the underworld

A (v. 20) - Idols

B - (v. 21) - cast into the underworld

v19-21 Compare v. 10, Ezek. 7:14-19.

v19 The BofM differs from the KJV:

KJV

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

BofM

And they shall go
into the holes of the rocks,
and into the caves of the earth,
for the fear of the Lord

shall come upon them
and the glory of his majesty
shall smite them

when he ariseth
to shake terribly the earth

v21 The BofM differs from the KJV:

KJV

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.

BofM

To go into
the clefts of the rocks,
and into the tops
of the ragged rocks,
for the fear of the Lord
shall come upon them

and the majesty of his glory
shall smite them,
when he ariseth
to shake terribly the earth.

22 Cease ye from man, whose breath [is] in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

v22 Refers to the Genesis creation account and reminds the reader Who put the breath in man in the first place. It also instructs the reader to stop relying on the arm of flesh. A strong conclusion to a chapter which attacks human pride.

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