

## Isaiah 2:1-5

<sup>1</sup>This is the message that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup>This will take place in the latter days:

The mountain of the LORD's house will be established  
as the chief of the mountains.

It will be raised above the hills,  
and all nations will stream to it like a river.

<sup>3</sup>Many peoples will come and say,  
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob.

Then he will instruct us about his ways,  
and we will walk in his paths."

For from Zion the law will go out,  
and the LORD's word will go out from Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup>He will judge between the nations,  
and he will mediate for many peoples.

Then they will beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into blades for trimming vines.

Nation will not lift up sword against nation,  
nor will they learn war anymore.

<sup>5</sup>O house of Jacob, come,  
and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

## Walk in the Light of the Lord

Dark times. It's difficult to walk in dark times. As most of you know, my family and I have done some hiking. Twice I have begun the last day's hike out of the Grand Canyon in the dark. You do that because you want to get as much climbing done as you can before the hot sun begins to beat down on you and sap your strength.

If you are going to start before sunrise, you had better have some light. Dark times can lead to catastrophic injuries when you can't see where you are going.

### I.

Dark times. That was what Isaiah experienced during most of his ministry as a prophet of the Lord. The nation of Israel that had been so great and powerful under King David has split into two kingdoms—the northern kingdom retained the name Israel while the southern kingdom was called Judah. That northern kingdom had fallen to foreign powers. The southern kingdom of Judah was facing enemy forces that threatened their destruction.

Isaiah was warning about the dark times. The enemy forces were not Judah's only problem. In fact, they were not even the most critical problem.

Judah had become dark spiritually. Chapter 1 of Isaiah's prophecy enumerates some of the godlessness of the people of Judah. The temple was still there, standing tall and proud. The priests were going through with all the ritual sacrifices and religious duties. Festivals were still being observed in their traditional ways.

All those festival celebrations had become something that most people just observed in the traditional way because it was the thing to do. The sacrifices were performed and the religious duties were observed by the priests simply because that was their job—that was how they earned their living. Most of the people—including most of the priests—were far from God in their hearts. They did not trust the Lord, but were looking elsewhere for peace and security.

Skipping ahead a number of chapters in his prophecy, Isaiah would report: "The Lord says:

“These people approach me with their words, and they honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is nothing but commandments taught by men” (Isaiah 29:13, EHV). Just rituals. Just attending the temple worship because that is what one did. Show up from time to time. Make your sacrifices in the ritual way, and go back home to the “real” world.

Isaiah spoke harsh words to Judah. Soon they would fall to a foreign power. Soon their country would be decimated because of their lack of trust in God and their obedience to his commandments. Soon their injustice to those who could not take care of themselves would come back to haunt them.

Isaiah writes in chapter 1: “Unless the LORD of Armies had left us a small surviving remnant, we would have been like Sodom; we would have become just like Gomorrah” (Isaiah 1:9, EHV). The northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah had become as corrupt as Sodom and Gomorrah. In his grace, God had not and would not completely obliterate them.

## II.

Dark times. Dark times does not just refer to Israel or Judah. *We* are walking in dark times.

If you haven’t yet felt the effects of inflation and recession, you will. Amazon and other tech companies are warning of a downturn. Layoffs have begun for some of them, and are projected to continue. Unless you have vowed to just not look, you have noticed significant losses in your retirement accounts. Most economists don’t think we have hit bottom yet.

But financial dark times are nothing compared to the dark times we are in as a nation morally. I know it’s always there. I have often said in sermons that immorality is always there. I suppose I would still say it isn’t necessarily worse than it’s ever been, but perhaps more blatant than I have ever seen or ever remember. The immoral seem more intent than ever of ramming their immorality down our throats and trying to force us to accept it and embrace it.

How about within the church? Are we holding back the tide, or are the immoralities of society creeping in? We certainly don’t want to turn anyone away from the gospel. The temptation within the church is to fail to point out sin; to start to go along with the pressures to stop calling immorality immoral; to begin to say that however you choose to live your life, God is ok with it.

As for the people of the church—God’s people—there have always been some who just come when it is convenient for them. “These people approach me with their words, and they honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Isaiah 29:13, EHV).

Dark times.

## III.

Isaiah urged: “O house of Jacob, come, and let us walk in the light of the LORD” (Isaiah 2:5, EHV). Though there were dark times, it was time to start the hike up the mountain. The people of Judah didn’t need headlamps as they would begin the hike urged by Isaiah. They could walk in the light of the Lord. His light had always been there. Isaiah urged them that it was time to use the Lord’s light again.

“This will take place in the latter days...” (Isaiah 2:2, EHV). Did you notice that phrase “the latter days” when we read the lesson earlier? What are the latter days? Many Christian people have been misled. Some teachers point to a time that still lies even in *our* future. They think there will come a time when Jesus will sit on an earthly throne and believers will be in charge with him. They wait for these days they believe are still to come. As we look forward to Christ’s second coming, it’s a good time to explore the “latter days.” The writer to the Hebrews says: “In these last days, [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe” (Hebrews 1:2, EHV). The writer identifies himself as being in the last days even as he wrote his letter. The last days began when Jesus came into the world the first time. The last days will end when Jesus comes a second time in all his glory at Judgment Day.

“This will take place in the latter days: The mountain of the LORD’s house will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it like a river” (Isaiah 2:2, EHV). Isaiah called the people of his day to look ahead to a time when people

would stream from all nations to worship the true God.

“Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. Then he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.’ For from Zion the law will go out, and the LORD’s word will go out from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3, EHV). Remember how Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the time was coming when worship would not be conducted in a particular location on a particular mountain anymore? The New Testament equivalent to the mountain of the Lord’s house is not a physical place, but it has become the greatest mountain of all. The mountain of the Lord is wherever the truth of the gospel is preached.

The gospel for today spoke about Jesus marching in to the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He came to conquer all the enemies people have.

He conquered the devil. Tempted beyond all human comprehension for 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus triumphed over Satan. He triumphed again and again and again, every day of his life in order to be the innocent Lamb of God who could serve as our sacrifice for sin.

He conquered sin with his perfect life and his innocent death. He paid for all the times we Christians only give lip service to God in our worship. He paid for all the times when we let the immorality of the world infest our thinking and try to suck us in to the same immorality. He paid for all our sins.

He conquered death by rising triumphant from the grave and promising that he will raise us at the last day to take us to be with him in heaven.

“Then he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths” (Isaiah 2:3, EHV). This is what we do at the Mountain of the Lord, the New Testament church. The great things God has done for us in sending Jesus to conquer sin, death, and the devil, predominates in our worship. We want others to know about it. Each of us wants to hear this great good news again and again and again.

#### IV.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind” (Luke 2:14, EHV). Already we look forward to the celebration of Christmas. Peace? Good will toward mankind? Real peace is peace between us and God. Only God can give that sort of peace. It is given because of his good will—his grace—toward mankind.

Isaiah says: “Then they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into blades for trimming vines. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, nor will they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4, EHV). Isaiah reminds us that our uphill climb isn’t over. We don’t need headlamps because we have the light of the Lord, but we haven’t reached the top of the mountain.

Swords and spears have given way to rifles and tanks and missiles and drones, but war is still a fact of life. Just a couple weeks ago we heard Jesus remind us: “Whenever you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified, for these things must happen first, but the end will not be right then” (Luke 21:9, EHV). Until the time Jesus returns at his second coming, wars and revolutions and all the other signs of the end will continue.

When we reach heaven: “Nation will not lift up sword against nation, nor will they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4, EHV). It’s coming. Don’t loose hope.

In the meantime, “Let us walk in the light of the LORD” (Isaiah 2:5, EHV). Come and worship, not just at Christmas and Easter, but regularly. Come and read his Word. Come and find peace for your soul—the peace that surpasses all human understanding—when you hear of all Jesus has done for you. Come to the Lord Jesus. Dark times call for us to Walk in the Light of the Lord. Amen.