

“The Mountain of the Lord”

Isaiah 2:1-22

Sunday, July 3rd, 2022

At Pastor’s Class last Wednesday I asked the youth this question, “*What was the tallest mountain before Mt. Everest?*” *Well, do you know?* Mt. Everest! It just hadn’t been discovered!

I remember learning many of the songs about America during my early childhood years. My favorite was (and still is) “America the Beautiful” written by Katharine Lee Bates in 1893 after a sight-seeing trip to Pikes’ Peak in Colorado. Here’s the first verse:

“O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain;
for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain!
America! America! God shed his grace on thee,
and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.”

This song has been sung at millions of funerals, among them President Kennedy’s, President George H. W. Bush’s, and President Reagan’s, as well as the first person to walk on the moon, Neill Armstrong.

Seventeen years ago, the Christian rock band, Third Day, released their hit song, “Mountain of God.” Here’s the familiar refrain:

“And even though the journey’s long and I know the road is hard
Well, the one who’s gone before me, You will help me carry on.
It’s And after all that I’ve been through, Oh, now I realize the truth
That I must go through the valley to stand upon the mountain of God.”

Mountains are also featured throughout Scripture. Consider just 3 of them:

- It’s where Noah’s ark rested after the flood while he and his family waited for the waters to recede. (Mt. Ararat)
- It’s where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. (Mt. Sinai)
- It’s where Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac and where Solomon built God’s temple. (Mt. Moriah)

Another mountain is featured in today’s text from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. It is Mount Zion (**Isaiah Chapter 2, verse 3**). We’re in the second sermon of a series on the Old Testament book of Isaiah, “The Holy One of Israel.” Let’s read **Chapter 2, verses 1-5**.

Isaiah 2:1-5:

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

2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *that* the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills;

to all nations shall flow to it. **3** Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways and we shall walk in His paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. **4** He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. **5** O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

MP 1 - The Mountain of the Lord (what could have been!) - v. 1-5

MP 2 - The Day of the Lord (what actually is) - v. 6-22

The first point is the Mountain of the Lord (What might have been). Verse 1 of chapter 2 restates some of verse 1 in chapter 1, providing a condensed version that Isaiah’s prophetic ministry was to the southern kingdom of Judah and her capital city, Jerusalem.

The text continues in verse 2, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days...” These latter days were yet future to Isaiah. And, to an extent they are yet future for us. The age of the Christian Church began its course with the first advent of Jesus Christ and is consummated with the second coming of Jesus on the last day. *What exactly is it that shall come to pass?*

Verse 2 teaches that the mountain of the Lord’s house will be established on the top of the mountains and will be exalted above the hills. All the nations will flow to it.

Verse 3 is where we see the “Mountain of the Lord” ” is the “house of the God of Jacob” - better known as “Mount Zion.” It was not the biggest mountain even among those where it was situated, but it did have the temple of God on it.

“Mountains played an important part in the religions of Israel’s neighbors. They were the points where heaven and earth were thought to meet and were therefore highly favored sites for altars and temples. The Canaanites worshipped their gods at these “high” places, and they became snares to the Israelites. Isaiah here foresees the day when only one mountain will stand supreme, reducing all others to utter insignificance.” (Webb, 45)

Verses 3-5 teach us what will happen there:

- Jesus will teach His people His ways and they (we) shall walk in His paths. Verse 5 indicates the walking mentioned here is in “the light of the Lord.” This is precisely what the Psalmist David also said of God in **Psalm 25:4**, “Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths.” **Deuteronomy 8:6** teaches further, “... you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.” To walk in God’s ways is to keep His commandments. Verse 3 says the law will go out of Zion; God’s commandments are His law.

- The people will be judged on top of the mountain of the Lord, and the impenitent (the unforgiving) will be rebuked.
- Signs of peace will be evident. Verse 4 (*NLT*) “They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation nor train for war anymore.”

The second point is the Day of the Lord (what actually is). Let’s read verses 6-22:

“For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with eastern ways; they *are* soothsayers like the Philistines, and they are pleased with the children of foreigners. **7** Their land is also full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is also full of horses, and there is no end to their chariots. **8** Their land is also full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. **9** People bow down, and each man humbles himself; therefore do not forgive them.

10 Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty. **11** The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, 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 come* upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up—and it shall be brought low—

13 Upon all the cedars of Lebanon *that are* high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; **14** Upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills *that are* lifted up; **15** Upon every high tower, and upon every fortified wall; **16** Upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all the beautiful sloops. **17** The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day, **18** but the idols He shall utterly abolish. **19** They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and the caves of the earth, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. **20** In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made, *each* for himself to worship, to the moles and bats, **21** To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crags of the rugged rocks, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. **22** Sever yourselves from such a man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils; for of what account is he?”

This passage begins with an acknowledgement that because of His people’s sins, God has forsaken them (but not totally). Those sins include:

- Being filled with “eastern ways”. This is rank paganism. It would include soothsayers (v. 6 - people who are supposed to be able to predict the future), magic, divination, palm and tarot card reading, crystals, reading of horoscopes, not to mention practices from eastern religions (among them Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Sikhism). Eastern practices are infiltrating Christianity in our day - adherents humming mantras in the hopes of becoming one with nature or God (which are not Christian aims), emptying the mind of everything (to include God’s Word); greeting others by namaste; advocating reincarnation and more).
- Verses 7-9 detail the love of treasures (full of silver and gold - no end to their treasures); weapons (horses and chariots), and idols (the worship of

things made with hands, bowing down and humbling oneself before others). The people were preoccupied with such things and God fumed.

Enter “the terror of the Lord” found in verses 10, 19 & 21. The Lord’s coming in terror sends the people to hide in the dust (v. 10) and prideful people will be humbled (v. 11). Twice (vs. 11 & 17) Isaiah uses the phrase “He (God) shall be exalted.” “Isaiah warns that the day of the Lord will be a day of terrible judgment for Judah in particular, but also for the whole world. Everything in which people have trusted instead of trusting the living God will be brought down - trees and mountains, fortifications, ships and money. Even religion will prove worthless on that day if it is man made, for man made religion (represented here by idols) is the supreme expression of human arrogance. It is an attempt to bend God to our will by remaking Him in our own image.” (Webb, 47)

Notice what Isaiah includes that God will come upon in judgment in verses 12-16:

- Upon everything lifted up (v. 12);
- Upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up (v. 13);
- Upon all the oaks of Bashan (v. 13);
- Upon all the high mountains (V. 14);
- Upon all the hills that are lifted up (v. 14);
- Upon every high tower (v. 15);
- Upon every fortified wall (v. 15);
- Upon all the ships of Tarshish (v. 16);
- Upon all the beautiful sloops (v. 16);

The Lord will bring everything low, and He alone will be exalted!

MP 1 - The Mountain of the Lord (what could have been!) - v. 1-5

MP 2 - The Day of the Lord (what actually is) - v. 6-22

As we close, we must see how this applies to us. We live in a nation that trusts in technology and wealth. It prefers the pagan religions of the east to the worship of the one, true God. Sadly, this infectious worldliness and pride has spread into the Church. Many no longer trust in the eternal God, but place their confidence in the weakness of man. Such pride and foolishness must be exposed and rebuked. If we continue on this path of pride, we will be destroyed. We will not be able to avoid the judgment of God today or in the Day to come. Let us, then, repent of our pride and trust in Jesus Christ, who alone can save us from God’s wrath.

Alila stood on the beach holding her tiny infant son close to her heart. Tears welled in her eyes as she began slowly walking toward the river's edge. She stepped into the water, silently making her way out until she was waist deep, the water gently lapping at the sleeping baby's feet. She stood there for a long time holding the child tightly as she stared out across the river. Then all of a sudden in one quick movement she threw the 6 month old baby to his watery death.

Native missionary M. V. Varghese often witnesses among the crowds who gather at the Ganges. It was he who came upon Alila that day kneeling in the sand crying uncontrollably and beating her breast. With compassion he knelt down next to her and asked her what was wrong. Through her sobs she told him, 'the problems in my home are too many and my sins are heavy on my heart, so I offered the best I have to the goddess Ganges, my first born son.'

Brother Varghese's heart ached for the desperate woman. As she wept he gently began to tell her about the love of Jesus and that through Him her sins could be forgiven.

She looked at him strangely. "I have never heard that before," she replied through her tears. "Why couldn't you have come thirty minutes earlier? If you did, my child would not have had to die."

Each year millions of people come to the holy Indian city of Hardwar to bathe in the River Ganges. These multitudes come believing this Hindu ritual will wash their sins away. For many people like Alila, missionaries are arriving too late, simply because there aren't enough of these faithful brothers and sisters on the mission field. *Christianity Today*, 1993