

Text: Isaiah 2:1-22

Title: The house of Jacob's God vs. the house of Jacob

Time: 3/2/2025

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Not everything that calls itself a church is a church of Jesus Christ. Not everything that calls itself a temple is a temple of the Lord.

Last December the Satanic Temple installed a display in Concord's City Plaza that included a demon's presentation of the seven tenets of their organization. City Councilwoman Michele Horne posted a lengthy defense of the city's decision to allow the display.

She said in part, "I fully stand behind my decision to allow for the unattended display that Satanic Temple installed in our city. It is not the place of Concord City Council to play theologians and decide the definition of religion or if we agree with a particular religion or not."

So it is the position of this Counselor that it is illegal for city leaders to tell the difference between God and Satan. Given this, I wonder how they can tell the difference between right and wrong or good and evil.

Not everything that calls itself a "religious" display is a religious display of God. Not everything that calls itself a church is a church of Jesus Christ. And not everything that calls itself a temple is a temple of the Lord.

It is that last truth that concerns our passage this morning. Our text is Scripture written by the hand of Isaiah under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit about Judah and Jerusalem (v. 1). One commentator explains: "A strange expression! 'to see

a word!" – yet it makes clear that words formed an essential element in the divine revelation" (Young, 95).

The divine revelation of God has no trouble discerning the difference between the temple of God and temples not of God. The Israel of Isaiah's time experienced days when the House of Jacob (v. 5) was no longer the House of the God of Jacob (v. 3). God's temple had changed into something else, and the Jewish people were having trouble telling the difference, much like the city counselors of Concord, NH.

The passage describes this significant contrast between God's temple and the contemporary temple ministry of Isaiah's day. In verses 2-4, the prophet describes the temple or house of the God of Jacob. In the rest of the chapter, he describes the temple or house of Jacob.

This description of the temple of Jacob falls both before and after a specific future date – "the day of the Lord" (v. 12a). Verses 5-9 describe the house of Jacob before the day of the Lord, a period of grace and the call to repentance. Verses 10-21 describe the house of Jacob in the day of the Lord, a day of judgment and the exaltation of the God of Jacob. These truths will organize our look at the passage this morning.

I. The House of the God of Jacob shall be glorious (vv. 1-4).

Illustration: Our newly elected President has entered office with a world at war. Each week we pray for the end of these wars and for those suffering in these warzones.

Application: The days of this future house of the God of Jacob shall be a time when new presidents no longer find the world at war and when we will no longer have to pray for the end of wars and for those suffering in warzones.

This blessing is yet future (v. 2). There is a sense in which we know from the New Testament that we are already in the last days, the days of the New Testament church, but the last days described here are not our days.

These last days are days yet future, and they are days that will be ushered in by the return of Jesus Christ. He came the first time offering peace on earth and good will to men as a suffering Savior (Luke 2:14). Without His salvation, none of us earthlings can be at peace with God.

Jesus is coming again, this time as the conquering King. Nations will no longer war against one another in those last days for two reasons, (1) a pilgrimage they make (v. 3), and (2) the King's rule with a rod of iron (v. 4; Rev. 19:15, "From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron.").

Notice with me three things about this pilgrimage and rule:

1. They are miraculous. Verse 2 tells us that at this future time God's temple mount will be the highest mountain, but then we read that nations flow or stream into it like a river running uphill. Isaiah speaks of an uphill stream because he wants to picture the magnetism of this future Jerusalem as a supernatural force. People are drawn to its blessing only through the miraculous power of God. This is true of every blessing of our salvation in Christ. It is ours only because of the saving power of our loving Savior's grace.

2. They are disciple-making. Verse 3 speaks of many people encouraging many other people to come to God's house to be taught of the Lord and to walk in His ways. This is our mission too. Calvin remarked on this passage: "And indeed nothing could be more inconsistent with the nature of faith than that deadness which would lead a man to disregard his

brethren, and to keep the light of knowledge choked up within his own breast" (quoted in Young, 104). Is it our desire to bring people with us to the house of God to hear the Word of the Lord and to learn of His ways?

3. They make for peace. To learn of the Lord and to walk in His ways, to be ruled by Him, is to embrace justice and settle disputes between one another. We have not learned from the Lord, nor are we ruled by Him, if we do not love our brother, for Jesus commanded us to love one another as He has loved us.

In our world of warzones, places are needed where people have learned from the Lord and are at peace with one another. In our world of warlords, there is need for places where the Prince of Peace rules. Wherever that learning and that rule are taking place, a mini-future-Jerusalem is there, reversing the division and confusion of Babel (see Young, 102).

Note: We who believe these conditions are literal, not symbolical or merely spiritual, and who believe that they can only happen after Jesus returns are premillennialists. In Matt. 24:6, Jesus describes our church age this way: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars, See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet." In His first coming, Jesus explained: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). So the literal earthly peace of this chapter belongs to a future age after He comes again.

II. The house of Jacob had failed God's people (vv. 5-9).

Application: One important detail to our understanding of these verses concerns to whom the *thou* of verse 6 refers. Many believe it refers to the Lord, who has abandoned His people, the house of Jacob.

I would include myself among others who believe that the *thou* still refers to the house of Jacob from verse 5. I would translate verse 6, "For you have abandoned your people, O House of Jacob." In verse 5, the prophet commands the house or temple of Jacob to begin walking again in the light of the Lord. In verse 6, the prophet tells the temple of Jacob why He concluded that they have been walking in darkness.

Isaiah mentions four consequences of the temple ministry's walking in darkness in his day, all of which indicate that the house of Jacob, prior to the day of the Lord, failed God's people. These consequences were spiritually destructive to the people of God, whom the temple was supposed to help spiritually. Each consequence of this temple malpractice contrasts one of the blessings that the future house of the God of Jacob shall bring about:

1. Rather than the world coming with God's people as in v. 2, God's people were going with the world (v. 6). Perversions of romanticism, postmodernism, and eastern mysticism have an enormous influence over God's people today.
2. Rather than pursuing the teachings and ways of the Lord as in v. 3, God's people heaped up material wealth (7a).
3. Rather than contributing to world peace as in v. 4, God's people had to multiply their armaments (7b).
4. Rather than faithful worship of their Maker as in v. 3, God's people worshipped idols of their own making (v. 8). The Apostle Paul speaks of a love of self, money, and pleasure that is greater than a love for God. These are the forms of our idolatry today.

What can be done under these dire circumstances? Isaiah has the answer in verse 5, "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord." Notice that Isaiah says *us*. He identifies with the need of a sinful people to walk in the light of the Lord. Chapter 6 tells us that when God called him to be a prophet, he

responded, "Woe is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). And so here he says, "Let us walk in the light of the Lord." Come with me. Let's do this differently, O house of Jacob (note that "do not forgive them" in v. 9 is better "you have not lifted them"; Isaiah would not ask God to not forgive Israel after calling them to walk in the light of the Lord).

New Boston Baptist Church is a house of God's people. Are we a church that brings the world with us, or do we go along with them? Are we a church that pursues the teachings and ways of the Lord, or do we pursue more silver and gold? Are we a church that brings peace on earth and good will toward men, or are we divided and quarreling? Are we a church that faithfully worships our Maker, or do we love self, money, and pleasure more than God? Isaiah's exhortation, "Let us walk in the light of the Lord," is for us too.

III. The house of Jacob will be judged in the day of the Lord (vv. 10-21).

Illustration: I had a nice opportunity to talk to one of our postal clerks in town about the gospel. I mentioned to her that we sang a hymn written by a postal clerk, James Nicholson, who wrote "Whiter Than Snow."

During the course of our conversation, she mentioned that she did not care for Roman Catholicism because it seemed like much of it was "just made up." I had the chance to explain to her that the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism boils down to one word - *alone*. Protestants submit to Scripture alone, whereas Catholics submit to Scripture plus the magisterium of the Roman Church. Protestants are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, whereas Catholics seek salvation in Christ plus the intercessions of Mary and

the saints, and they seek it by faith plus the works of the sacraments and whatever additional payments must be made in purgatory. *Alone* is the theme of Protestantism.

Application: *Alone* is also the theme of a special day of Old Testament prophecy, which Isaiah mentions in verses 10-12. The Lord alone will be exalted in the earth in that day (v. 17). It is a day that comes against the pride of man, destroying both his accomplishments and his idols.

This day will be judgment against man's exaltation of nature (vv. 13-14). It will be a day of judgment against man's sense of independence and security apart from God (v. 15). It will be a day of judgment against man's maritime commerce and his pleasure cruises (v. 16). And it will be a day when man's love of self, love of money, and love of pleasure, which are more than his love of God, completely vanish (vv. 18-21).

The day of the Lord will be a day when who and what God truly is will no longer be our world's best kept secret. It will be a day of the fear of the Lord, a day when the glory of his majesty is in full view, and a day when He shakes the earth so that it comes to its senses (vv. 10, 19, 21).

The day of the Lord will be a day when men run to hide in the rocks from His judgment, but there never was a place anyone can hide from the God of heaven.

Conclusion: So that day is coming. That day is your future, and it is mine. It is the future of the house of Jacob, and it is the future of New Boston Baptist Church. And so what are we to do? Is there any way we can be ready for the day when men try to run away from God but cannot?

The prophet gives the answer we need in verse 22. Isaiah's answer tells us that to avoid the futility of trying to run from

God's judgment someday, we must run away from man today. In other words, the only way to safely run from God and His judgment is to run to Him away from man.

Man must not keep us from God. Man can do nothing unless God first puts breath in his nostrils. Trusting in the ways of man is a lost cause, because the day comes in the life of every man when God no longer puts a breath in his nostrils.

New Boston Baptist Church is a house of professing believers, just like the temple of Isaiah's day was the house of Jacob. What can make us the house of God in truth, the true church of Jesus Christ? Isaiah's word to us this morning is the same as his word to the house of Jacob. We shall be the house of the God of Jacob, a true church of Jesus Christ, only if we will cease from man to walk in the light of the Lord. Will you cease from man and walk with us?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*