The Mountain Of The House Of The Lord

Isaiah 2.1-5

*The Eschatology Of Isaiah*

It should be pointed out that v.1 seems to repeat what the introduction of Chapter one said by the parallel prophetic phrase, “the word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” It almost sounds like the beginning of the book again. But this superscription may simply be needed to introduce the vision from a specifically eschatological angel. The superscription probably extends from Ch.2-4 making the theme of God’s “mountain” the focus. The focus on God’s mountain is eschatological in nature. It takes the reader on a trip to consider how things will be in the future in order to awaken them to the way things are in the present so that the nation can experience some level of renewal and sanctification now. Scripture speaks with perfect unity on the issue of eschatology. From Genesis to Revelation, eschatology is both future and present in the sense that as we look to the future, God gives us the impetus for living in the now. Isaiah’s eschatology is no different. Vv. 1-4 are talking about the end of the age, a time when God’s final victory over all kingdoms will come to fruition (v.2), when all nations will bow or burn (v.3), and where all peoples who have turned to the Lord will stream into Zion the city of the living God where justice will reign (vv.3-4). The result will be a perfect universal peace that will never end (v.4). The result of Isaiah’s eschatology, as we will see, is a call to walk in *holiness* (v.5).

*The Victory Of Har Magedon*

But the eschatology of Isaiah is cast in the language of *Har Magedon* (cf. Is. 14.13), the mount of assembly which is Zion, the mountain of the Lord, here called, “The mountain of the house of the Lord” (הַ֤ר בֵּית־יְהוָה֙). In other words, it is the “mountain” (הַ֤ר) that is associated with God’s “house” (בַּיִת). When we look at the theme of God’s mountain, what we find is that there is an elaborate theology of God’s mountain as an expression of His sovereignty, His reign, His heaven, His people, His judgment, His glory, His palace, His temple, His kingdom, and His victory. This is why the “mountain of God” is such an appropriate term to be used here; it captures so much of who God is and what He will do. In recent scholarship perhaps no one has done more penetrating exegetical and theological research on this whole mountain theme than Meredith G. Kline whose writings on this have set the trajectory for scores of scholars ever since. The book where he sought to bring all of this mountain theology together is his book entitled, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos (2007).* Here Kline labors to show just how central this mountain theme is to the overall scheme of what can only be called a *biblical-theological eschatology*. Firmly rooted in Biblical Theology in the tradition of Vos, Kline expands the notion of Scripture’s organic unity not only structurally but theologically. The mountain theme being a central *loci*. Kline writes:

“Har Magedon—well named, this heavenly mount, the mountain of God. For it is the mount of gathering in multiple senses. Primarily and forever it is the temple-mount, the assembly place of the worshipping, celebrating entourage of the King of glory, a myriad congregation of angels and men (cf. Heb 12:18–29; Pss 47:9; 48; 102:21, 22 [22, 23]). Here is the council chamber where God assembles the heavenly elders for deliberation (cf. Ps 82:1). This celestial mount is the paradise to which God’s exiled people of every nation are regathered (cf. Deut 30:3–5; Isa 27:12, 13; 43:5; Jer 32:37–41; Ezek 11:17–20; 36:24). Har Magedon is the palace-fortress against which Satan’s antichrist, aspiring to the throne on this mountain, gathers his hordes in the final battle of Har Magedon (cf. Ezekiel 38–39; Rev 16:14–16; 19:19; 20:8), an event which, from the perspective of God’s sovereignty, is a divine gathering of the nations to Zion for their final judgment (cf. Joel 3 [4]; Zech 12:3; 14:2; Matt 25:31, 32). This Mount of Assembly is the heavenly hearth to which the Lord gathers his elect, one by one in their passing from the earthly scene (cf. Isa 26:20; Luke 16:22; Rev 6:9–11) and as a resplendent multitude raised from the dust in resurrection glory at his final harvesting of the earth at his parousia (Dan 12:2; Matt 13:30; 24:31; Mark 13:26, 27; 2 Thess 2:1; Rev 14:14–16).” (Meredith G. Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 56–57).

Isaiah is seeing that “in the last days” (בְּאַחֲרִ֣ית הַיָּמִ֗ים) God’s mountain reign will triumph over all other would be kingdoms, houses of worship, religions, gods, principalities and powers whatever they may be, and “be established” (נָכ֨וֹן)- a sign of permanent victory. For Isaiah the “the last days” are future, prophetic of a time that will take place decades, even centuries after him and yet, they also point to a future more permanent victory which operates *Messianically* where what comes into view is no longer the partial fulfillments embodied by Israel on the national level but Messianically, redemptively and at the consummate level. Isaiah sees a future in which, at the anti-typical level, there will no longer be temples destroyed, kingdoms splintered, nations in revolt, and captives in exile; all God’s people will be gathered to Har Magedon and there will be no one to harm on the holy mount (11.9; 65.25). This is what was envisioned by John the revelator when Har Magedon reaches its ultimate fulfillment. Here in Revelation, Har Magedon is the scene of God’s final conquest, final conflict and final victory over His enemies:

**Revelation 16:13–16** 13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”) 16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

Both Isaiah and John are viewing the “great day of God, the Almighty” when God will bring an end to all armies of the nations who persecute God’s people and are led by the antichrist world system in their futile pursuit of immortality and vain glory (cf. 1 Th. 5.2ff.).

*The Gospel Of Har Magedon*

In addition to asserting the complete and total establishment of the victory of God’s mountain, Isaiah also envisions a radical end-time inclusion wherein, “all the nations will stream to it” (ְנָהֲר֥וּ אֵלָ֖יו כָּל־הַגּוֹיִֽם). The glorious reality here is that just as God’s mountain will rise high above all enemies and grind into powder all would be ‘mountains’, such pseudo-Zions will not prevent God from showing mercy and sinners willfully surrendering to His Lordship:

**Isaiah 2:3**“And 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; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

What is also intimated by this vision is in keeping with a central burden in Isaiah, namely the subjection of the nations to the rule and word of Lord. It also reminds us that humanity has only one hope, one source, and one way to lasting peace. Only Zion will issue forth the clarion call of truth which the nations must obey if they are to see lasting peace. This peace is seen from *two results* in the text, justice and reconciliation. The nations will come into God’s canopy of justice. He will render justice by removing the enmity that now stands between all nations. Even in our own day, the nations are in upheaval. War drums in the East, threat of nuclear catastrophe, ethnic and religious conflicts that cannot seem to be resolved by anyone regardless of how much money is spent in the effort of global peace; true peace still evades us. That is because such peace will only happen through the gospel:

**Ephesians 2:14–22** 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Paul’s use of Isaiah 57.19 in v.17 shows us that in the mind of the apostles, the justice and peace envisioned by Isaiah was ultimately awaiting messianic fulfillment, gospel fulfillment. From this standpoint, the enmity, and the injustices of war and conflict are made right by the “blood” of atonement not by conversations on “racial reconciliation.” We need to remove the curse of sin, not the propensities of racism. Thankfully, Isaiah also envisions this removal, indeed, a reversal of sin. This is done with the language of *recreation*, a return to the Edenic state, a paradise-reality when once again, under God’s rule and authority, we will occupy ourselves with tending God’s Garden and populating His Glory-Image throughout the world:

**Isaiah 2:4** “… they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.”

Any time there is a future that restores God’s people to an ideal condition, there is on the part of God, a divine “remembering” usually accompanied by a reference to Abraham and the past promises of God. This text is then tethered to the promises of the gospel by pointing us forward to a time of eternal *shalom*, realized through Abraham’s messianic Seed (cf. Gal. 3.16). Isaiah engages in this sort of thing repeatedly:

**Isaiah 11:6–9** 6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. 7 Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea.

**Isaiah 51:1–3** 1 “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, Who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn And to the quarry from which you were dug. 2 “Look to Abraham your father And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was but one I called him, Then I blessed him and multiplied him.” 3 Indeed, the Lord will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the Lord; Joy and gladness will be found in her, Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.

The prospect of this future paradise-situation becomes the eschatological basis for Isaiah’s concluding exhortation, “Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the Lord” (v.5) (בֵּ֖ית יַעֲקֹ֑ב לְכ֥וּ וְנֵלְכָ֖ה בְּא֥וֹר יְהוָֽה). As with all eschatology, *the future empowers the now*. At least that is the desired intent. Knowing the reality of God’s future kingdom produces in the lives of the faithful a distinctly holy life where God’s law, the “word of the Lord” (v.3) becomes our rule of faith and all of our lives come in to conformity with His truth (cf. Col. 9-10). Isaiah’s eschatological imperative is echoed in the NT with crystal clear clarity:

**1 John 3:1–3** 1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

In John and Isaiah, this purity consists of walking in God’s *light* (cf. 1 John 1.10). The “light” here has two meanings. In John, the light predominantly emphasizes God’s own moral purity, His majestic holiness, and sanctification. But in Isaiah, the exhortation is mainly *revelatory*. If the Gentiles are exhorting one another to learn God’s law, how much more Judah, the “house of Jacob” (בֵּ֖ית יַעֲקֹ֑ב) should not seek God’s truth, God’s law, God’s word? This is a call for the people of God to walk according to their own calling, their own standards, the standards revealed uniquely to them in God’s word (cf. Ps. 147.20; Rom. 3.2; 9.4; Eph. 2.12). The same applies to us today. We have the gospel, we have the full disclosure of God’s revelation, we have the Canon of Scripture. We have been given much and much will be required of us (cf. Lk. 12.48). It begs the question, what are we doing with God’s revelation. Do we study it, do we devote our time to it, are we serious about obeying it, is it our authority, and is our conscience captive to the word of God? These questions are not superficial. If Judah’s situation teaches us anything, it teaches us that when the people of God abandon God’s rule, all we are left with is man-made devices. Isaiah presents the terrifying ordeal of the people of God when they abandon His word- He abandons them to the fallen wisdom of man:

**Isaiah 2:5–6** 5 Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. 6 For You have abandoned Your people, the house of Jacob, Because they are filled with influences from the east, And they are soothsayers like the Philistines, And they strike bargains with the children of foreigners.

The wisdom of God, the word of God, the light of the Lord is thus, *counter-cultural*, in fact, it is diametrically opposed to wisdom of this age. Israel was to embody that more than any one on earth in their commitment to God’s law. But the gospel puts us in the same position today and thus, our choice is the same, God’s wisdom over against the world’s futile ways:

**1 Corinthians 1:20–21** 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

**1 Corinthians 2:6–8** 6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; 7 but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

Knowing the future of Har Magedon only emphasizes the futility of the world’s wisdom and even more so the folly of God’s people turning to worldly wisdom versus trusting in revelation of the God of truth. The wisdom of this world is passing way but the word of the Lord endures forever.