The Lord Alone Will Be Exalted

Isaiah 2.6-22

Just as with the preceding context (vv.1-5), vv.6-22 give us a certain reality with an exhortation. In the opening of the Chapter, Isaiah focused on what is the future ideal state of God’s people in His consummated kingdom. There the exhortation was *positive*, namely the call to walk in God’s light (v.5). Here, Isaiah returns to the present dismal state of affairs with yet another exhortation this time in the *negative*, namely the call to stop trusting in the man- Judah’s sinful tendency (v.22).

The heart of the passage is found in vv.10-12. Notice that Isaiah goes from addressing the people in v.5 to suddenly then addressing the Lord, “You have abandoned Your people” in v.6. He now shifts the focus away from the ideal potential of the nation if they repent and obey to now setting out the dread of failing to trust the Lord; a message that Isaiah saw as universal, eschatological and realized only at the subjugation of all mankind. The emphasis on the remainder of the Chapter for Isaiah is judgment not redemption. But as with every major section of Isaiah, judgment never seems to have the last word. The text emphasizes four thing, *universal terror judgment, universal humiliation of man, universal exaltation of God, and the universal call of the gospel*.

*Isaiah and Messianic Eschatology*

As we consider the central passage of the surrounding context, we must make the Messianic connection to get the full-orbed intent of the text. Not only does Isaiah foresee the time when God will judge Judah’s immediate enemies (Assyria and Babylon), as with the Egyptians and others, but their very historical situation forms the basis for the exaggerated metaphor to pass into apocalyptic reality of the end-time judgment of Jesus Christ at His coming. The same imagery is found in other prophets for the doom of Israel’s enemies (cf. Hos 10.8). The passage (and its parallels) before us is ultimately fulfilled at the parousia-judgment of Christ and is alluded to clearly in Revelation:

**Revelation 6:15–17** 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

The final and full exaltation of God and the universal abasement of man will not be fully realized until Jesus, God’s end-time Servant Redeemer and Consummator, will come at the appointed time to judge the world in righteousness. As a point of hermeneutics, Christology and specifically as it relates to Christ in all of Scripture, the student of Scripture needs to envision Jesus walking through the corridors of the OT books as Creator, Redeemer and Consummator. The images of the Son in the OT reflect His person and work in one of those modes of His pre-incarnate activity upon the stage of redemptive history (cf. Lk. 24.26f; 44f; Jude 5). Therefore, the terrible judgments spoken of in this text have had their historical fulfillment and await their future fulfillment in and through Christ. This will be the realization of the great and terrible Day of the Lord (cf. 1 Th. 5.1ff.).

*Universal Terror Of Judgment*

Not only do we learn of the unfolding of end-time prophecy, but we also learn so much about the nature of God and the nature of man not to mention the nature of the conflict between God and man. Notice that the “terror” (פַּ֫חַד) spoken of here is brought about by the “splendor of His majesty” (וּמֵהֲדַ֖ר גְּאֹנֹֽו) not because of anything monstrous in God or because of anything frightening due to something unpredictable in God’s character or attributes as if God is out to harm the harmless. It is precisely because of God’s perfections that such dread will come upon the world. The more of the holiness of God that man sees and the more righteous indignation God demonstrates the more man will fear God. They fear him because of their own imperfections not His. Ironically, it is the very attributes so cherished by the Church that the world will dread the most, His holiness, His glorious presence:

**2 Thessalonians 1:6–10** 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

*Universal Humiliation Of Man*

In this universal judgment and humbling of man’s pride, the abasing of the world will not just be for the sake of suffering the loss of worldly pleasure, showing the world the banality of carnal pursuit, or even the punishment of man’s sin; but further than this, this universal humiliation of man will be realized in the universal recognition and confession of Jesus’ Lordship. Isaiah himself foretold of this very thing:

**Isaiah 45:22–25** 22 “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. 23 “I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. 24 “They will say of Me, ‘Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength.’ Men will come to Him, And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. 25 “In the Lord all the offspring of Israel Will be justified and will glory.”

Paul picks up where Isaiah leaves off to remind us that all of God’s Servant songs, all of God’s Glory vision and end-time upheavals will be realized in Jesus Christ.

**Philippians 2:9–11** 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The humiliation Isaiah speaks of will be brought on by the universal homage given to Christ at the end of the age. “every knee”, “every tongue.” To everyone who spurns the Lord, to every faithless heathen and every apostate backstabber of Christ; all will bow before they burn. Those who do not willfully bow having had their hearts melted and subdued through His grace, will bow before they burn and confess before they’re condemned that Jesus is Lord! With the rise of social media, the world, including the Church, has become universally and almost instantaneously digitally self-conscious. With this new level of singularity, we have become more and more aware of just how prevalent apostasy is. I focus on this because I believe in the days and years to come there will be what will only be described as a diabolical intensification of apostasy in the Evangelical Church. But such apostates have deceived only themselves. Oh, they may think that they have made a clean neat break with their religious past and their Christian affiliations and so feel a sense of euphoric release from the burden of their conscience as they transition into a “new phase of life” and “discover” themselves all over again. This is what Jesus is talking about, ‘you must lose your life in order to find it’ (cf. Mt. 16.24ff.). But just as they think they have rid themselves of their obligations to God, there is coming a great assize where the only encounter with God left will be to meet Him in judgment (cf. 2 Cor. 5.10-11; Rev. 20.11-15). The heroin rush of apostasy is a quick and shallow thrill compared to the sobriety of God’s almighty wrath (cf. Rev. 14.19-20; 19.15). As the faithless are humbled to the dust, the faithful are afforded this sobering word of comfort and consolation:

**Revelation 14:9–13** 9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” 12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’ ” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.”

*Universal Exaltation Of God*

As is often the case in Isaiah, especially in the midst of such apocalyptic visions, doom and death are not the final word. The universal abasement of the wicked will be the prelude to the universal exaltation of God. Isaiah repeats the theme of triumph, “the Lord alone will be exalted in that day” (vv.11, 17). He rises to crush the “idols” (v.18), the pride of man (v.19), the misplaced hopes of man so that what they trust in becomes miserably obsolete (v.20); He rises “to make the earth tremble” (v.21), but He rises so as to be exalted. Just as God arose above the primordial chaos of darkness and void to sit as Sovereign over His creation (Gen. 1.2, 2.1-4), so too, God will arise over the chaos of man’s depravity and sit and rule and reign enthroned as the King of new creation (cf. Is. 33.17). It is not surprising that Isaiah shifts to a description of Zion’s exaltation, to the Lord’s exaltation for, they go together:

**Isaiah 33:17** 17 Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; They will behold a far-distant land.

**Isaiah 33:20–22** 20 Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an undisturbed habitation, A tent which will not be folded; Its stakes will never be pulled up, Nor any of its cords be torn apart. 21 But there the majestic One, the Lord, will be for us A place of rivers and wide canals On which no boat with oars will go, And on which no mighty ship will pass— 22 For the Lord is our judge, The Lord is our lawgiver, The Lord is our king; He will save us—

The exaltation of the Lord is an exclusive exaltation, where “the Lord alone will be exalted,” because, the Lord’s redemption is an exclusive redemption, the Lord alone “will save us.”

*Universal Call Of The Gospel*

In calling the nation to look away from the strength of man (v.22), we are reminded of the need look totally outside of themselves (which is antithetical to the Spirit of the age), to a power, a righteousness and a hope completely foreign to them. That is the gospel; trusting not in man but in an alien righteousness that comes to us by faith:

**Philippians 3:7–11** 7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

To avert certain judgment, we must be hidden in Him. To be hidden in Christ (Col. 3.3), to be united to Christ by faith, is to be secure from final falling, eternal judgment and infinite wrath (cf. 1 Th. 5.9). Even for the believer, in the inner recess of our heart, where might our trust be misplaced? Do we look to our own wisdom? Do we look to our own strength? Do we look to our own works? To be hidden in Christ involves a perpetual looking to Christ for perpetual grace! This is precisely where the ancient nation failed. While they should have looked upon Christ their Deliverer to deliver them; looking, by faith, at the types and shadows of the Son, we too are called to see Jesus not to quicksand of self-reliance (cf. Mt. 7.24ff; also, Heb. 12.1-3). This more so true for us now that the veil has been removed and the object of our faith has become clearer than ever in the face of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 4.4-6).