

• *The result of paganism – humanity humbled*

Isaiah has described God's plan for his Jerusalem^{□1}, but now is pointing to what is happening in his own day^{□2}. The people of Israel were looking for guidance to paganism^{□3} with its apparent wealth^{□4} and its obvious idolatry^{□5}. Verse 9 is a statement of the inevitable result.

□1 2:2-5
□2 2:6-4:1
□3 2:6
□4 2:7
□5 2:8

⁹As a result humanity will be brought low and mankind will be humbled; and for sure you will not forgive them.

• *Idolatry degrades human nature and rouses God's wrath*

Israel's interest in paganism might seem to be broadmindedness or a harmless hobby with some profitable side-effects but in point of fact idolatry degrades human nature; humanity is brought low. And few things rouse God's wrath more than idolatry. Nothing brought judgement upon Israel more swiftly than their turning to other gods. They have reached the point where God will not allow his name to be associated with their idolatry.

In judgement God gets his honour back

In judgement God gets his honour back. Isaiah says:

¹⁰Go into the rocks, hide in the dust from dread of Yahweh and the splendour of his majesty.

• *Idolatry humiliates God*

¹¹The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; Yahweh alone will be exalted in that day.

• *God will set the record straight!*

Idolatry humiliates God and exalts the superstitious gods that men and women make for themselves. Human creations get admired; divine glory is ignored. But God will inevitably step in to put the record straight!

Isaiah lists the things that men and women admire:

¹²Yahweh Almighty has a day in store against everything that is proud and lofty, against everything that is exalted (and they will be humbled),

• *The people love and admire their trees and hills*

¹³against all the cedars of Lebanon, tall and lofty, and all the oaks of Bashan,

• *Military power and profitable business are doomed where they detract from the glory of God*

¹⁴against all the towering mountains and all the high hills,

¹⁵against every lofty tower and every fortified wall,

¹⁶against all the ships of Tarshish and every stately vessel.

• *Human pride will be put down*

These are the things that people think are marvellous: the wonderful trees which made the people of Lebanon and Bashan so proud of their locality, the great hills on top of which were the high places where idolaters used to worship filthy gods. Isaiah speaks of military power and marvellous ships in which to do highly profitable business. But where such things take away from the glory of God, they are doomed. Human pride will be put down; divine honour will be lifted up. The gods that are admired will be treated as the nonentities that they are in reality.

¹⁷And so the arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled;

Yahweh alone will be exalted in that day,

¹⁸and the nonentities will totally disappear.

In judgement men and women review their past with horror

In judgement men and women review their past with horror. When God is seen as he really is, acting in anger against sin, and idols are seen as nonentities, people will run for their lives to anything or anywhere where there might be some way of escape.

• *When God acts against sin, idols are seen as nonentities and people will flee*

¹⁹ People will flee to the caves in the rocks
and to holes in the ground
from dread of Yahweh
and the splendour of his majesty,
when he rises to shake the earth.
²⁰ In that day men will throw away
to the rodents and bats
their idols of silver and idols of gold,
which they made to worship.
²¹ They will flee to caverns in the rocks
and to the overhanging crags
from dread of Yahweh
and the splendour of his majesty,
when he rises to shake the earth.

A preview of judgement corrects our perspective

• *God uses Isaiah to warn us to give us right perspective*

• *Human inventions are all unable to solve our problems*

• *Everything is controlled by God – better to turn to Him*

• *God delays the day of judgement to give mankind plenty of time to come to its senses*

• *Submit to God!*

A preview of judgement corrects our perspective. Why does God say all these things – speaking through Isaiah? It is so that with clear spiritual vision we may learn to see these things now; then we shall not need to be in terror later. We must place God and man in right perspective.

²² Stop trusting in man,
in whose nostrils is breath.
Of what account is he.

A glance back at the section in 2:6–21 shows us what Isaiah has in mind. Man-made religion^{☐1}, human economics and fundraising^{☐2}, human military resources^{☐3}, man-made gods^{☐4} are all equally useless to touch the real problems of the human race. Isaiah will go on to mention the hero and warrior, the judge and prophet, and so on. The world admires its superstars and gold medallists, its philosophers and scientists. But they all have their limitations. Can they forgive sins? Can they give a new heart? Can they defeat death? When it comes to life’s biggest questions, they are as useless as anyone else. In such matters, ‘Of what account is he?’ None at all. Men and women stay alive only if they are those ‘in whose nostrils is breath’. But even their very breath is short-lived, given by God, and is removable at nil notice. Better to give our attention and our trust to the one who gave men and women the breath of life in the first place.

History is under the control of God. He already has in mind a time he will act with irresistible power and with great speed. Yahweh Almighty has a day in store. He delays the coming of the final day, because he is willing to give the human race plenty of time in which to come to its senses. In the day of final judgement no one will be able to say he or she did not have enough time for God. God gives us plenty of time! But the time when God patiently allows idolatry to continue has an end to it. God already has the last day ready and prepared. Stop trusting in man, says Isaiah. He cannot give the answer to life’s problems. Only submission to God, and to what God says about sin and salvation, will bring any long-lasting answer to our problems

☐1 2:6
☐2 2:7a
☐3 2:7b,
15
☐4 2:8



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