

Isaiah 2:13-17 Commentary

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Isaiah 2:13 And it will be [against all](#) the [cedars](#) of [Lebanon](#) that are [lofty](#) and [lifted](#) up, [Against all](#) the [oaks](#) of [Bashan](#), ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): and upon every cedar of Libanus, of them that are high and towering, and upon every oak of Basan,

Amplified: [The wrath of God will begin by coming down] against all the cedars of Lebanon [west of the Jordan] that are high and lifted up, and against all the oaks of Bashan [east of the Jordan], ([Amplified Bible Lockman](#))

KJV: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,

NET: for all the cedars of Lebanon, that are so high and mighty, for all the oaks of Bashan; ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: for all the cedars of Lebanon, high and proud, and for all the oaks of Bashan; ([NJB](#))

NLT: And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, Against all the oaks of Bashan, ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And for all cedars of Lebanon, The high and the exalted ones, And for all oaks of Bashan,

And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, against all the oaks of Bashan

- Is 10:33,34; 14:8; 37:24; Ezekiel 31:3-12; Amos 2:5; Zechariah 11:1,2

DIVINE JUDGMENT AFFECTS CREATION

It - Refers to the Day of the LORD (and the divine judgment it brings) (Is 2:12-note)

It will be against all the cedars...the oaks - As discussed below there is no reason to not interpret this literally. So even as God's judgment would be against the glory of men, it would also fall upon the glory of creation. And so in the Revelation John describes a literal fulfillment of this prophecy writing "And the first (trumpet) sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and **a third of the trees were burned up**, and all the green grass was burned up. (Rev 8:7-note)

ISBE emphasizes the glory of the great [cedars of Lebanon](#) - "Cedar trees are everywhere mentioned with admiration in the Old Testament. Solomon made the cedar the first of trees (1Ki 4:33). They are the "**glory of Lebanon**" (Is 35:2; 60:13). The most boastful threat of Sennacherib was that he would cut down the tall cedars of [Lebanon](#) (Is 37:24)." (Orr, J., M.A., D.D. The International standard Bible encyclopedia: 1915 edition)

Cedars of Lebanon ([See Lebanon](#)) - Some take the natural and manmade allusions in Is 2:13, 14, 15, 16 as metaphors for personages (such as kings or military leaders), but **there is no reason these should be interpreted literally**. We know that the earth was subjected to God's curse because of sin and the Day of the LORD is simply a culmination of God's wrath against sin and that wrath includes not only men but the creation.

Motyer agrees with a literal interpretation but nicely ties it in with the emphasis on human pride in Isa 2:11, 12, 17, writing that "every exalted thing, whether natural (Is 2:13, 14) or made with human hands (Is 2:15, 16), **somehow reflects humankind's arrogant pride and so falls when it falls**. There is an ambivalence in the Old Testament view of the created world. As God's world, it always sides with him (Is 1:2), but as humanity's world it is implicated in the curse humanity's sin has brought. The thorns of Genesis 3:18 are at once nature's hostility to the sinner and nature's corruption by sin (cf. Ro 8:20, 21, 22, 23). (Motyer, J. A. The Prophecy of Isaiah: Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.) (Bolding added)

MacArthur interprets the passage literally writing that "The cedars and oaks were objects of great admiration to people of OT times (Ps 92:12; 104:16; Ezek. 27:6; 31:3). Yet even these impressive created objects would face destruction because of human rebellion.

W E Vine gives us an example of a figurative interpretation in spite of the fact that it can be interpreted literally - "the cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan, illustrative of natural glory and power, **are symbolic of military leaders of the nations** gathered finally against the Jews." There is nothing in the text which allows one to conclude the trees are military leaders.

Keil - The prophet then proceeds to enumerate all the high things upon which that day would fall, arranging them two and two, and binding them in pairs by a double correlative *Vav*. The day of Jehovah comes, as the first two pairs affirm, upon everything lofty in nature. (Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. Commentary on the Old Testament. 7:80. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson)

Keil goes on to elaborate on Isaiah's use of nature with an interesting discussion...

In order to understand the prophet, we must bear in mind what the Scriptures invariably assume, from their first chapter to the very close, namely, that the totality of nature is bound up with man in one common history; that man and the totality of nature are inseparably connected together as centre and circumference; that this circumference is affected by the sin which proceeds from man, as well as by the anger or the mercy which proceeds from God to man; that the judgments of God, as the history of the nations proves, involve in fellow-suffering even that part of the creation which is not free; and that this participation in the "corruption" (*phthora*) and "glory" (*doxa*) of humanity will come out with peculiar distinctness and force at the close of the world's history, in a manner corresponding to the commencement; and lastly, that the world in its present condition needs a *palingenesia*, or regeneration, quite as much as the corporeal nature of man, before it can become an object of good pleasure on the part of God. We cannot be surprised, therefore, that, in accordance with this fundamental view of the Scriptures, when the judgment of God fell upon Israel, it should also be described as going down to the land of Israel, and as overthrowing not only the false glory of the nation itself, but everything glorious in the surrounding nature, which had been made to minister to its national pride and love of show, and to which its sin adhered in many different ways. What the prophet foretold began to be fulfilled even in the Assyrian wars. The cedar woods of [Lebanon](#) were unsparingly destroyed; the heights and valleys of the land were trodden down and laid waste; and, in the period of the great empires which commenced with Tiglath-pileser, the Holy Land was reduced to a shadow of its former promised beauty. (Ibid)

(**Ed comment on Keil's note:** And there is a day yet future when it will be laid waste, e.g., see Re 8:7ff [note](#))

Isaiah 2:14 [Against all the lofty mountains, against all the hills that are lifted up, \(NASB: Lockman\)](#)

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): and upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill,

Amplified: And [after that] against all the high mountains and all the hills that are lifted up, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up,

NET: for all the tall mountains, for all the high hills, ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: for all the high mountains and for all the proud hills ([NJB](#))

NLT: Against all the lofty mountains, Against all the hills that are lifted up, ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And for all the high mountains, And for all the exalted heights,

Against all the lofty mountains, against all the hills that are lifted up:

- Is 30:25; 40:4; Ps 68:16; 110:5,6)

Isaiah continues the description of God's judgment which includes His creation.

Isaiah 2:15 [Against every high tower, against every fortified wall, \(NASB: Lockman\)](#)

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): and upon every high tower, and upon every high wall,

Amplified: And against every high tower and every fenced wall, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,

NET: for every high tower, for every fortified wall, 16 for all the large ships, for all the impressive ships. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: for every lofty tower and for every towering wall; ([NJB](#))

NLT: Against every high tower, Against every fortified wall, ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And for every high tower, And for every fenced wall,

Against every high tower, against every fortified wall: Against every...against every - speaks of the totality of the destruction. **High tower...fortified wall** - These are literal structures which are representative of man's arrogance that he can build towers high enough and walls thick enough to assure his security. God's judgment will show the vanity of such reasoning. High towers will be no obstacle for the Most High God!

Isaiah records "And on every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall." (Isa. 30:25).

Fortified wall - The Hebrew word for fortified (batsar) speaks of that which is inaccessible or impenetrable and wall (chomah) describes a wall. What may be impenetrable by man will be penetrated by the judgment of God! Men who place their confidence in anything but God will find their sources of confidence will be of no protective value.

Keil commenting on Is 2:15, 16 writes that "The glory of nature is followed by what is lofty and glorious in the world of men, such as magnificent fortifications, grand commercial buildings, and treasures which minister to the lust of the eye. (Ibid)

Isaiah 2:16 [Against all the ships of Tarshish and against all the beautiful craft.](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): and upon every ship of the sea, and upon every display of fine ships.

Amplified: And against all the ships of Tarshish and all the picturesque and desirable imagery [designed for mere ornament and luxury]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

NET: for all the large ships, for all the impressive ships. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: for all the ships of Tarshish and for everything held precious. ([NJB](#))

NLT: Against all the ships of Tarshish, And against all the beautiful craft. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And for all ships of Tarshish, And for all desirable pictures.

Against all the ships of Tarshish and against all the beautiful craft:

- Is 23:1; 1Ki 10:22; 22:48,49; Psalms 47:7; Revelation 18:17, 18, 19
- Beautiful - Nu 33:52; Re 18:11

Against all...against all (Hebrew = kol) - emphasizes the totality of the destruction. This refers to the lofty, lucrative commercial activities of man such trade being essential in the life of the nations. They will be brought low in the coming day of judgment, the Day of the Lord.

Ships of Tarshish (see [Tarshish](#)) - These were at that time the largest ships, capable of the greatest voyages and of transporting the greatest cargoes. These are best interpreted as literal ships but clearly reflect man's ability to build and to "triumph" over the mighty sea.

John describes the "abasement" of man's commercial enterprises just before Christ returns to set up His Millennial kingdom...

for in one hour such great wealth has been **laid waste!** And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor,

and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, 18 and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?' (Babylon) 19 "And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been **laid waste!**' (Re 18:17-[note](#), Re 18:18-[note](#), Re 18:19-[note](#))

Beautiful ([02532](#)) (**hemdah**) describes that which is pleasant or desirable. It is used to describe an object of value. What men value, God will judge.

Craft ([07914](#)) (**sakiyah**) is translated as ship, but by others as picture and thus the variance of interpretations.

Beautiful craft - Because of the variance of translation of the Hebrew word sakiyah, this could represent ships or could refer to "pleasant pictures" (KJV, cp Amplified, NJB, Young's).

Isaiah 2:17 The **pride of man** will be **humbled** and the **loftiness of men** will be **abased**; And the **LORD alone** will be **exalted** in that **day** (**NASB: Lockman**)

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): And every man shall be brought low, and the pride of men shall fall: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

Amplified: Then the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

NET: Proud men will be humiliated, arrogant men will be brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. 18 The worthless idols will be completely eliminated. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: Human pride will be humbled, human arrogance brought low, and Yahweh alone will be exalted, on that day. 18 When the idols all disappear, ([NJB](#))

NLT: And the pride of man will be humbled, And the loftiness of men will be abased, And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And bowed down hath been the haughtiness of man, And humbled the loftiness of men, And set on high hath Jehovah alone been in that day.

The pride of man will be humbled and the loftiness of men will be abased; and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day

- Is 2:11; 13:11; Jer 48:29,30; Ezek 28:2-7

MAN HUMBLLED JEHOVAH EXALTED

Isaiah 2:11-note is almost identical. Man has had his "day" so to speak, but this is God's day and when it arrives, He alone will be exalted among the nations. This prophecy is yet to be fulfilled, but just as many other OT prophecies have been literally fulfilled, so too will this prophecy be literally fulfilled.

Constable - Everyone, not just the Israelites, who exalts himself against the Lord will suffer humiliation. The Lord's day of reckoning (Is 1:12) is any day in which He humbles the haughty, but it is particularly the Tribulation (**Ed**: Daniel's Seventieth Week) in which He will humble haughty unbelievers. Isaiah used nature and the works of man to symbolize people (cf. Is 1:30; 6:13; 9:10; 10:33-11:1; 44:14; 60:16). Here several of these symbols represent the spiritual pride of Israel (cf. Ro 12:3; Ep 4:2). ([Isaiah 2 Expository Notes](#))

THE MIDDLE LETTER OF PRIDE IS "I"!

Pride ([01365](#)) (**gabhut**) speaks of that which is lofty and thus describes men as arrogant, haughty, conceited. This particular

Hebrew word is used only in Isaiah 2:11 and Isaiah 2:17. In Is 2:11, it describes that "look" of arrogance (we've all seen that look on someone's face - it needs no description).

- [Pride - Bridgeway Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Pride - Torrey's Topical Textbook](#)
- [Pride - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Pride - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Pride - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Pride \(2\) - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Pride - Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature](#)

Humbled ([07817](#)) (**shachach/sahah**) (Isa 2:9-note, Is 2:11-note, Isa 2:17-note) means to be bowed down, prostrated, humbled which is the sense in this passage. It can also mean to bow in homage (Pr 14:19), to bow (as a mourner Ps 35:14, 38:7), to crouch (as a wild beast, Job 38:40). Later in Isaiah shachach is used of laying low a city or city walls (Is 25:12, 26:5). The **Septuagint (Lxx)** translates shachach in Isa 2:13 with **tapeinoo** which is derived from **tapeinos** which means low, not high and figuratively refers to one's attitude or social position. And so the verb **tapeinoo** literally means to level, to cause something to be lower or to make low (eg, to level off a mountain in Lk 3:5 quoting the **Lxx** of Isaiah 40:4). Most NT uses of **tapeinoo** are figurative and include the following meanings: To cause someone to lose prestige, to reduce to a meaner condition or lower rank, to abase. To be ranked below others.

Sachach/sahah - 21v in the OT - Job 9:13; 38:40; Ps 10:10; 35:14; 38:6; 42:5, 6, 11; 43:5; 107:39; Pr 14:19; Eccl 12:4; Isa. 2:9, 11, 17; 5:15; 25:12; 26:5; 29:4; 60:14; Hab 3:6 and is rendered in the NAS as been humbled(1), bow down(1), bowed down(3), bowing(1), bows down(1), bring down(1), brought low(1), collapsed(1), crouch(2), despair(4), humbled(3), prostrate(1), sing softly(1).

Abased ([08213](#)) (**shaphel/sapal**) (Frequent in Isaiah - Is 2:9, 11, 12, 17; 5:15; 10:33; 13:11; 25:11, 12; 26:5; 29:4; 32:19; 40:4; 57:9) conveys the basic sense of to be low physically, which leads to the more important figurative meanings of abasement, humbling, humility.

The **Lxx** translates "**loftiness** of men will be **abased**" as "the **height (hupsos)** of men will **fall** (pipto)!"

Calvin - The Prophet declares that (ultimately) he had his eye on men, when he described the various kinds of loftiness; for God is not displeased with the steep mountains or tall cedars, which He created, but informs us that the whole evil lies in men, who vainly trust to what is high and lofty.

In that day - See discussion of the synonymous phrase in Isaiah 2:11-note

All that mankind has accomplished will be shown to be only vanity of vanities **in that day**. **What day?** In the context this is a reference to the triumphant return of He Who is Faithful and True, the Word of God (Rev 19:11-13-[note](#)), our Lord Jesus Christ, when He returns to set up His **Millennial Reign**.

Jehovah alone will be exalted in that day - Mark that word "Alone" which in this context means in essence the Supreme Sovereign! Ultimately this will be perfectly fulfilled when the Messiah returns to rule the world as "**KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS**." (Rev 19:16-[note](#)).

It is interesting that the **Lxx** translates **exalted** with **hupsos** (means to lift up) and translates **loftiness** (of men) with **hupsos** (state of being high). The latter *think* they are "*lofty*" but Jesus is ultimately the only One Who is "*lofty*" and worthy of being "*lifted up*."

Related Resource - Messiah - Anointed One

Nave's Topic Scriptures on Pride

- Ex 18:10, 11; Lv. 26:19; Deut. 8:11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20; Jdg. 9:14, 15; 1Sa 2:3, 4, 5; 1Ki 20:11; 2Ki 14:9, 10 2Chr 25:18, 19. Job 11:12; 12:2, 3; 13:2, 5; 15:1-13; 18:3, 4; 21:31, 32; 32:9, 10, 11, 12, 13; 37:24; Ps 9:20; 10:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11; 12:3, 4; 18:27; 31:23; 49:11; 52:7; 73:6, 8, 9; 75:4, 5, 6; 101:5; 119:21, 69, 70, 78; 138:6;
- Proverbs 3:34; 6:16, 17; 8:13; 10:17; 11:2, 12; 12:9, 15; 13:10; 14:21; 15:5, 10, 12, 25, 32; 16:5, 18, 19; 17:19; 18:11, 12; 20:6; 21:4, 24; 25:14, 27; 26:5, 12, 16; 27:2; 28:11, 25; 29:8, 23; 30:12, 13;
- Isaiah 2:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17; 3:16-26; 5:8, 15; 9:9, 10; 10:5-16; 13:11; 14:12, 13, 14, 15, 16; 22:16, 19; 23:7, 9; 24:4, 21;

26:5; 28:3; 47:7, 8, 9, 10;

- Je 9:23, 24; 13:9, 15, 17; 48:7, 14, 15, 29 Is 16:6, 7. Je 49:4, 16; 50:31, 32; Ezek. 16:56; 28:2-9, 17; 30:6; 31:10, 11, 12, 13, 14.; Da 4:37; 1:45; Ho 5:5, 7:10, 10:11; Ob 3, 4; Nah 3:19; Hab. 2:4, 5, 9; Zeph 2:10, 15; Zeph. 3:11; Mal. 4:1;
- Mt 23:6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 20:26, 27; Mk 10:43; Lk 9:46; 18:14. Mk 7:21, 22; 12:38, 39 Lk 20:45, 46, 47, 1:51, 52; 11:43; 14:8, 9; 20:46 Mt. 23:6, 7. Ro 1:22, 29, 30; 11:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25; Ro 12:3, 16; 1Co 1:29; 3:18; 4:6, 7, 8, 10; 5:2, 6; 8:1, 2; 10:12; 13:4; 14:38; 2Co 10:5, 12, 18; 12:7; Ga 6:3; Ep 4:17; Phil 2:3; 1Ti 2:9; 3:6; 6:3, 4, 17; 2Ti 3:2, 4; Jas 3:1; 4:6; 1Pe 5:3, 5; 1Jn 2:16; Re 3:17, 18; 18:7, 8