

Isaiah 24:15

Here the NIV reads: "Therefore in the east give glory to the LORD." The Hebrew literally reads: "Therefore in the fires glorify the LORD." The meaning of "east" was introduced when some commentator suggested that there must be a contrast with "west" in the previous verse. In that case "west" is a possible rendering of "from the sea" since there are many places where "sea" is used to mean "west." However, there is no other case known to me where "fires" have ever been interpreted as meaning "east."

The word also occurs (in the singular) in Isaiah 31:9, 44:16, 47: 14, 50:11, and Ezek.5:2. In all of these, except Isaiah 50:11, it is usually translated "fire," and in some of them the context clearly requires this translation. In Isaiah 50:11 it is translated "light" since it is immediately followed by another word for "fire."

I have often preached on this passage from the KJV, showing the carrying of the message of salvation across the sea to the West, but also with the prospect of having to glorify God amid the fires of persecution. I find both thoughts clearly present in this context, and consider the passage to be a prediction of the wonderful outreach of God's provision for salvation.

The only possible justification for the translation "east " is the idea that "fires" would suggest the coloring of a sunrise. However, there is no reason why it should suggest "sunrise" more than "sunset," and there is no evidence that it is ever used for either. Personally I would greatly prefer the literal translation as suggested above.

Naturally, if one does not believe that God could lead the Old Testament prophets to predict matters beyond their knowledge, one has to find some other interpretation. Therefore both Brown, Driver and Briggs, and Koehler-Baumgartner suggest that it means the region of fires, and therefore the east, but cite no other passage and no supporting evidence.