

September 14–20: Isaiah 1–12, “God Is My Salvation”

Nephi Helps Us Understand Isaiah

These chapters of Isaiah are recorded in 2 Nephi. After including the words of Isaiah in his record, Nephi explains what Isaiah’s words mean. This is very beneficial for us because we can use Nephi’s explanation to help us better understand Isaiah’s words.

Nephi tells us why he went through all the work of recording and explaining the words of Isaiah.

2 Nephi 11:2,8

2) And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him.

8) And now I write some of the words of Isaiah, that whoso of my people shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men. Now these are the words, and ye may liken them unto you and unto all men.

What does Nephi hope will happen when his people read the words of Isaiah?

(he verily saw my Redeemer
lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men
ye may liken them unto you and unto all men)

Russell M. Nelson

“Because Isaiah is quoted so extensively, he deserves mention as one of the major contributors to the Book of Mormon.... Some 433 verses of Isaiah—roughly a third of the entire book—are quoted in the Book of Mormon.... One scholar of Isaiah documents that no less than 391 of the verses refer to the attributes, appearance, majesty, and mission of Jesus Christ (see Monte S. Nyman, “Great Are the Words of Isaiah”).” (CR, Oct. 1999)

But Nephi also knew that Isaiah’s words would be difficult for both his people and us to understand.

2 Nephi 25:1-2,7

1) Now I, Nephi, do speak somewhat concerning the words which I have written, which have been spoken by the mouth of Isaiah. For behold, Isaiah spake many things which were hard for many of my people to understand; for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews.

2) For I, Nephi, have not taught them many things concerning the manner of the Jews; for their works were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations.

7) But behold, I proceed with mine own prophecy, according to my plainness; in the which I know that no man can err; nevertheless, in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled men shall know of a surety, at the times when they shall come to pass.

What makes Isaiah's prophecies difficult to understand?

(for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews)

What does Nephi say about his own explanation?

(no man can err)

Nephi gives a clear explanation of Isaiah's message in 2 Nephi 25.
He emphasizes the following points:

- Judah will be taken captive because of their iniquity.
- Christ's earthly ministry.
- The scattering and scourging of the Jews.
- The latter-day restoration and gathering of Israel.

The Destruction of Judah

The first message is that Jerusalem will be destroyed and the Jews will be taken captive

2 Nephi 25:9-10

9) And as one generation hath been destroyed among the Jews because of iniquity, even so have they been destroyed from generation to generation according to their iniquities; and never hath any of them been destroyed save it were foretold them by the prophets of the Lord.

10) Wherefore, it hath been told them concerning the destruction which should come upon them, immediately after my father left Jerusalem; nevertheless, they hardened their hearts; and according to my prophecy they have been destroyed, save it be those which are carried away captive into Babylon.

Despite many warnings, the Jews in Jerusalem hardened their hearts and were taken captive to Babylon.

This was foretold by Isaiah.

Isa 5:1-2

1 Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

What does the vineyard represent, and what do the other elements symbolize?

(Vineyard in a very fruitful hill
fenced it, and gathered out the stones

planted it with the choicest vine,
built a tower in the midst of it
it brought forth wild grapes)

Isa 5:3-6

3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

How does the Lord respond when His vineyard produces “wild grapes”?

(take away the hedge (his protection))

What happens when the Lord removes His protection from the vineyard?

(it shall be eaten up... and it shall be trodden down
I will lay it waste... there shall come up briers and thorns)

What does the vineyard’s destruction symbolize about Jerusalem and Judah?

Jews taken captive and Jerusalem is left desolate

Isaiah illustrates why Judah is considered “wild grapes.”

Isa 5:11-13

11 ¶ Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!

12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.

13 ¶ Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.

What was the cause of the Jews’ captivity?

(because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished,
and their multitude dried up with thirst)

What spiritual condition is Isaiah describing through the metaphors in verse 13?

Isa 3:16-24

16 ¶ Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet:

17 Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts.

18 In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon,

19 The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers,

20 The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings,

21 The rings, and nose jewels,

22 The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins,

23 The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.

24 And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.

What does their focus on appearance and possessions reveal about some of the inhabitants of Zion?

Wilford Woodruff

“There are some prophecies pertaining to these latter days that are unpleasant to contemplate.... I have been reading the third chapter of Isaiah, and I have been hoping, all the days of my ministry, that the sayings contained in that chapter would never apply to the daughters of Zion in our day.... In spite of the follies that some among us delight in, we are going to build up Zion.... By and by, when we are sanctified and made perfect, when we are chastised and humbled before the Lord, when we have got our eyes opened, and our hearts set upon building up the kingdom of God, then will we return and rebuild the waste places of Zion.” (JD, 16:263)

Christ's Earthly Ministry

The next message Nephi emphasizes from Isaiah is Christ's ministry.

2 Nephi 25:12-13,19

12) But, behold, they shall have wars, and rumors of wars; and when the day cometh that the Only Begotten of the Father, yea, even the Father of heaven and of earth, shall manifest himself unto them in the flesh, behold, they will reject him, because of their iniquities, and the hardness of their hearts, and the stiffness of their necks.

13) Behold, they will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulchre for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings; and all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Wherefore, my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name.

19) For according to the words of the prophets, the Messiah cometh in six hundred

years from the time that my father left Jerusalem; and according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Isaiah foretells the coming of Christ.

Isa 7:14

14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isa 9:6-8

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of government and peace there is no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.

8 The Lord sent his word unto Jacob and it hath lighted upon Israel.

What do the names and titles of Christ in these verses teach us about who He is and what He will do?

Thomas S. Monson

"For generations, enlightened mankind anxiously sought the fulfillment of prophecies uttered by righteous men inspired of Almighty God. For did not Isaiah declare: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' And again, 'For unto us a child is born... and his name shall be called... The Prince of Peace.'...

"With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment—a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to be the King of kings and Lord of lords the Promised Messiah, even Jesus Christ the Son of God." (CR, Oct. 1965)

The Scattering of the Jews

Nephi explains Isaiah's discussion of the scattering and scourging of the Jews.

2 Nephi 25:15-16

15) Wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered among all nations; yea, and also Babylon shall be destroyed; wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered by other nations.

16) And after they have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations, yea, even down from generation to generation until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind—and when that day shall come that they shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah, then, at that time,

the day will come that it must needs be expedient that they should believe these things.

What do we learn about the reason, extent, duration, and eventual outcome of the scattering of the Jews?

Isa 3:1-8,12

1 For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,

2 The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient,

3 The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

4 And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.

5 And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.

6 When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand:

7 In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people.

8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

12 ¶ As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.

Why did the Lord remove Judah's wise and capable leaders, and what resulted from their absence?

(they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths)

Hugh Nibley

"The costly fashions reflect a world in which people are out to impress and impose themselves on others. Everyone is after a career, everyone is aspiring to be a VIP: 'The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient. The captain... and the honorable man, and the counselor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.' What about them? 'I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.' So much for their authority--and why? Because everyone is out for himself.... They stubbornly think they can go it alone." (Old Testament and Related Studies, pg.224)

The Gathering of Israel

Next: The coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the gospel in the

latter days, and the gathering of Israel.

2 Nephi 25:17-18

17) And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men.

18) Wherefore, he shall bring forth his words unto them, which words shall judge them at the last day, for they shall be given them for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them; and unto the convincing of them that they need not look forward any more for a Messiah to come, for there should not any come, save it should be a false Messiah which should deceive the people; for there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets, and that Messiah is he who should be rejected of the Jews.

Isa 2:2-3

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

What do you think is meant by “the mountain of the Lord’s house”?

Gordon B. Hinckley

“Ever since the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated, we have interpreted that scripture from Isaiah, repeated again in Micah as applying to this sacred house of the Lord. And of this place, since the day of its dedication, an ever-increasing number from across the world have said in effect, ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He might teach us of His ways, that we might walk in His paths.’

“I believe and testify that it is the mission of this Church to stand as an ensign to the nations and a light to the world. We have had placed upon us a great, all-encompassing mandate from which we cannot shrink nor turn aside. We accept that mandate and are determined to fulfill it, and with the help of God we shall do it.” (CR, Oct. 2003)

What do you think is meant by “out of Zion shall go forth the law”?

Harold B. Lee

"I have often wondered what that expression meant, that out of Zion shall go forth the law. Years ago I went with the brethren to the Idaho Falls Temple, and I heard in that inspired prayer of the First Presidency a definition of the meaning of that term "out of Zion shall go forth the law." Note what they said: "We thank thee that thou hast revealed to us that those who gave us

our constitutional form of government were men wise in thy sight and that thou didst raise them up for the very purpose of putting forth that sacred document [the Constitution of the United States - D&C 101]..." (Improvement Era, Oct. 1945)

Isa 11:10-14

10 ¶ And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

13 The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

14 But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them.

Who is the “root of Jesse” mentioned in verse 10?

D&C 113:5-6

5) What is the root of Jesse spoken of in the 10th verse of the 11th chapter?

6) Behold, thus saith the Lord, it is a descendant of Jesse, as well as of Joseph, unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days.

John Taylor

"We certainly have a work to perform on the earth, and God our Father has selected us for that purpose. He raised up Joseph Smith and other men, and conferred the holy Priesthood upon them and today they are found organized as Elders, High Priests, Seventies, the Twelve, etc., by whom the Lord expects to lift up a standard to the nations, and an ensign to the people. And notwithstanding the calculations and plans of the world, we are told that when this standard is lifted up, the Gentiles shall seek unto it, 'and his rest shall be glorious.'" (JD, 23:333)

What is the “ensign” that the Lord will set up to gather Israel?

Bruce R. McConkie

"When Isaiah promised that the Lord would 'set up an ensign for the nations' and gather the dispersed of Israel, the ensign, the standard, the divine flag around which all men should rally was to be the holy gospel." (Bruce R. McConkie, The Millennial Messiah, pg.106)

Note that the Gentiles will seek it first (verse 10) and then “the remnant of

his people”

What will happen to the dispersed of Judah who are scattered throughout the earth?

Ezra Taft Benson

"This miracle of the return of the Jews was to be one of the events to precede Christ's second coming, and the scriptures are very clear with reference to this fact. Isaiah said that they shall gather 'the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth' and 'set them in their own land' (Isa 14:1), that they will 'build the old waste,' and 'repair the waste cities' (Isa 61:4)." (CR, April 1950)

What do you think is meant by “they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines”?

Orson F. Whitney

“We recognize the fulfillment of that prophecy in the founding of this Church by Joseph Smith, a lineal descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who thus lifted the Ensign for the gathering of their descendants from their long dispersion among the nations. But a part of the fulfillment rests with the Gentiles. Their steamships, their railroads, their means of rapid transit and communication -- these are ‘the shoulders of the Philistines,’ upon which the children of Ephraim have been and are being brought to the West, to the land of Zion.” (CR, Oct. 1919)

Note from verse 13 that Judah and Ephraim were enemies. Ephraim was captured by Syria during Isaiah’s time.

This concept of the Gentiles helping Israel physically gather is similar to another passage in Isaiah.

Isa 5:26-29

26 ¶ And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:

27 None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:

28 Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses’ hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind:

29 Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it.

How might the symbolism in these verses relate to the gathering of Israel?

LeGrand Richards

“In fixing the time of the great gathering, Isaiah seemed to indicate that it

would take place in the day of the railroad train and the airplane...

“Since there were neither trains nor airplanes in that day, Isaiah could hardly have mentioned them by name. However, he seems to have described them in unmistakable words. How better could ‘their horses’ hoofs be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind’ than in the modern train? How better could ‘their roaring... be like a lion’ than in the roar of the airplane? Trains and airplanes do not stop for night. Therefore, was not Isaiah justified in saying: ‘none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken’? With this manner of transportation the Lord can really ‘hiss unto them from the end of the earth,’ that ‘they shall come with speed swiftly.’ Indicating that Isaiah must have foreseen the airplane, he stated: ‘Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows’ (Isaiah 60:8)?” (Israel! Do You Know?, pg. 182)

And Isaiah tells us what Zion will be like after the gathering.

Isa 4:2-6

2 In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

3 And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:

4 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

5 And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.

6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

Isa 11:6-9

6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

What do these passages teach us about why peace will exist in Zion and throughout the earth?

(the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem
here shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain
the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD)

James E. Faust

"Advances in communication and travel during this last century have hastened the pace at which the word of the Lord goes out from Zion. I feel much like Isaiah, who spoke of our time, when 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' I believe that this marvelous outpouring of knowledge has heightened our ability to take the Lord's saving message to the world, 'that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations' (Luke 24:47)." (CR, April 1999)