

September 28–October 4: Isaiah 40–49, “Comfort Ye My People”

Blessings of Honoring Our Covenants

The choice faced by Israel in Isaiah’s time is much the same choice we face today: whether to honor our covenants and follow Christ or to pursue the temporary pleasures of worldliness.

Isaiah gives us many examples and descriptions of the blessings that come from choosing to follow Christ.

For the following passages we are about to read, ask yourself:
What blessings are promised to those who honor their covenants and follow Christ?

Isa 40:11-18

11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Isa 49:9-10

9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.
10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

What blessings are promised to those who honor their covenants and follow Christ?

- Christ will shepherd those who follow Him along the right path.
(he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them)

Delbert L. Stapley

“Jesus knew His hearers were acquainted with the prophecy that a shepherd had been promised the children of Israel. David, the shepherd boy who became king, wrote the beautiful Twenty-third Psalm that begins: ‘The Lord is my shepherd’ (Ps 23:1). Isaiah prophesied that when God would come down, ‘He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm.’ There was no mistaking what Jesus meant. He was their Lord—the promised Messiah! He will gently lead his sheep.” (CR, April 1977)

Isa 40:13-14

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?

14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of

understanding?

What blessings are promised to those who honor their covenants and follow Christ?

(taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding)

Isa 40:28-31

28 ¶ Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

What blessings are promised to those who obey their covenants and follow Christ?

(He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength
they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength)

Jeffrey R. Holland

"A rewarding, abundant, and eternal life is the very object of His merciful plan for His children! It is a plan predicated on the truth 'that all things work together for good to them that love God' (Romans 8:28). So keep loving. Keep trying. Keep trusting. Keep believing. Keep growing. Heaven is cheering you on today, tomorrow, and forever.

"'Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard?' Isaiah cried. '[God] giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.... They that wait upon [Him] shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles. For... the Lord... God will hold [their] right hand, saying unto [them], Fear not; I will help thee.' (Isaiah 40:28, 29, 31)." (CR, April 2016)

Isa 41:17-18

17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

What blessings are promised to those who honor their covenants and follow

Christ?

-He knows our needs, cares for us, and will never forsake us.
(I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them)

This blessing can also be taken literally.

LeGrand Richards

"Isaiah saw that the Lord would cause the wilderness to blossom as the rose. He saw the rivers flow in the desert and flow down from the high places to make this land productive. And why? So that the Saints, when they were gathered here, could fulfill his promises. For if this gospel that Jesus referred to was to be preached in all the world, it had to be done by his children. And hundreds of thousands of Latter-day Saint missionaries... for he so indicated that it must be preached in all the world." (CR, April 1978)

Isa 42:16

16 And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

What blessings are promised to those who honor their covenants and follow Christ?

-He makes our pathway clear.

Robert D. Hales

"There is a way out of the 'mists of darkness' and onto the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. The Lord told Isaiah, 'I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them.'" (CR, April 2002)

Isa 43:2-5

2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

3 For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

5 Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;

What blessings are promised to those who honor their covenants and follow Christ?

-He will help us through our trials

Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,...
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.
("How Firm a Foundation," Hymns, no. 85)

Isa 43:24-26

24 Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

26 Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.

What blessings are promised to those who honor their covenants and follow Christ?

(he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins)

Boyd K. Packer

"Justice and mercy and repentance and forgiveness work together to erase transgressions.

"The discouraging idea that a mistake (or even a series of them) makes it everlastingly too late, does not come from the Lord. He has said that if we will repent, not only will He forgive us our transgressions, but He will forget them and remember our sins no more." (CR, April 1989)

Isa 45:12,18

12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.

What blessings are promised to those who honor their covenants and follow Christ?

-Christ created the earth so that we could fulfill our purpose in our second estate and partake in the great plan of happiness.

Neal A. Maxwell

"Thus, it is from the scriptures that we learn of God's plans for mankind on this planet. He told us, through Isaiah, that He formed this earth to be inhabited. Through Moses, God described His purpose: 'to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man' (Moses 1:39). Furthermore, by viewing the heavens and the galaxies, those who have eyes to see will see 'God moving in his majesty and power' (D&C 88:47).

"We are thus enveloped in a planned universe, and we live on a purposeful planet; and these truths describe 'things as they really are' (Jacob 4:13). No wonder the gospel is such glorious and good news!" (CR, Oct. 1986)

Isa 46:3-4

3 ¶ Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb:

4 And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

What blessings are promised to those who honor their covenants and follow Christ?

-From the time we are in the womb throughout our lives, even into old age, Christ is with us and will bear us up.

Isa 49:14-16

14 But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

What blessings are promised to those who honor their covenants and follow Christ?

(yet will I not forget thee)

Gene R. Cook

"Jesus taught that we pass through all these trials to refine us 'in the furnace of affliction' and that we should not bear them unaided, but 'in [the] Redeemer's name.' In spite of our feeling, at times, that He has forgotten us, He testifies, 'Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.... Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.'

"I testify that the Lord, through His grace, can continually assist us in our daily lives and in our physical and mental sickness, pain, transgressions, and even in all of our infirmities." (CR, April 1993)

The Wickedness of Babylon

Isaiah portrays Babylon as a proud, powerful woman who believes she is secure and will rule forever.

Isa 47:1,5-8

1 Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.

5 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.

6 ¶ I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

7 ¶ And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.

8 Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:

What specific acts and attitudes made Babylon wicked in the eyes of the Lord, and what ultimately led to her downfall?

-Showed no mercy to covenant Israel, but laid great burdens upon her.
(thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke)

-Boasted of being indestructible, but failed to see the judgment that would finally destroy her.
(I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it)t, neither didst remember the latter end of it)

-The considered themselves to be more important than anything else
(that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me)

-And because of this they feel justified in doing whatever they want
(thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly)

Isa 47:10-11

10 ¶ For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.

11 ¶ Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.

What were the consequences of Babylon relying on her own wisdom and knowledge?

(Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee
evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth)

Isa 47:12-15

12 Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.

14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.

15 Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

What does Isaiah reveal about the sources Babylon trusted for wisdom and guidance?

(Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee)
(they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame)

The Lord makes it clear what blessings they can expect if they follow Him

Isa 48:14-18

14 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans.

15 I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

16 ¶ Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

17 Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

How does the Lord describe His role in teaching, guiding, and redeeming Israel?

(I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee

by the way that thou shouldest go
thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea)

John Taylor

"There is nothing that makes things go so well among the saints of God as living their religion and keeping the commandments of God, and when they don't do that, then things go awkward and cross and every other way but the right way; but when they live their religion and keep the commandments, 'their peace flows as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea.'" (JD 26:66)

The Northern and Southern Kingdoms

A few weeks ago, we studied how the Northern Kingdom was captured by the Assyrians. During that same time, the Assyrians also came against Jerusalem.

The Assyrians would require Jerusalem to pay tribute and eventually be relocated to other conquered lands. If Jerusalem did not agree then the Assyrians would destroy them.

Isa 36:1-2,13-20

1 Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them.

2 And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.

13 Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you.

15 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

16 Harken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;

17 Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

18 Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?

20 Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

Whom did the Assyrian messenger tell the people of Judah not to trust, and what did he urge them to do instead?

(Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you
Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD
thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me)

Let's read how King Hezekiah responded to the Assyrians.

Isa 36:5-7

5 I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

6 Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

7 But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?

Despite the Assyrians' threats, how did King Hezekiah respond?

-You put your trust in the power of man.
(thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it)

-Judah has been taught to worship Jehovah and we will put our trust in Him.
(We trust in the LORD our God)

Hezekiah seeks counsel from the Lord through Isaiah.

Isa 37:5-7

5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 ¶ And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

And because Hezekiah trusted in the servant of the Lord, his people were miraculously spared.

Isa 37:36-38

36 Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

37 ¶ So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped

into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

How was Isaiah's prophecy concerning the king of Assyria fulfilled?

JST Isa 37:36

Then the angel of the LORD went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when they who were left arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses

This marked the beginning of the end for the Assyrians.

The Northern Kingdom trusted in the world and was destroyed, while Judah trusted in the Lord and was spared.