Visualizing Isaiah

Donald W. Parry
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extend appreciation to all whose efforts have made this book possible. In particular, I thank Tana and Mac Graham, for traveling to the Holy Land with the express purpose of taking photographs for this volume; Sunny Larson, for editing the manuscript and coordinating the efforts of those involved in the volume’s layout, editing, and publication; Carmen Cole, for photo editing, interior and cover design; Bjorn Pendleton, for interior design; Alison Coutts, for overall coordination and support; Carrilyn Clarkson, for photography, photo editing, and image consultation; Jay A. Parry and Tina M. Peterson, my coauthors on Understanding Isaiah (Deseret Book, 1998), for permitting me to adapt parts of that volume for Visualizing Isaiah; D. Kelly Ogden, for his careful review of the manuscript, especially the maps; Mindy Anderson, S. Kent Brown, Justin Craig, Arnold H. Green, Matthew J. Grey, Leigh Gunnell, Brent Hall, Andy North, D. Kelly Ogden, John W. Welch, for photography; Laren R Robison, for his expertise on plants and animals; Andrew Livingston, for cover design and maps; and Julie Dozier, for copyrights and permissions.

Donald W. Parry
My colleague, J. Scott Miller, a professor of Japanese at Brigham Young University, related the following story:

Immediately after graduating from BYU I spent some time as a graduate research fellow at a Japanese university. During that time I inherited an advisor who . . . had great interests in philosophy and music (he had a grand piano in his tiny office, around which we would conduct our conversations). One day we were discussing the concept of space when he suddenly played a first, then a second note on the piano.

“What do you hear?” he asked.

“A fifth,” I replied.

“No, what are you listening to?” he inquired more earnestly, playing the notes again.

“Two notes,” I responded, puzzled.

“That is precisely the point. You hear the notes. We Japanese hear the silence in between. Westerners focus on what is there, Asians focus on what is not.” (Maeser’s Edge, 12/6:1, emphasis in original)

Many of us read Isaiah’s words like Westerners hear musical notes. We grasp the literal sense of the language but fail to perceive the imagery behind the words. We are fully aware of the obvious—the two notes of music—but unaware of what exists beyond the apparent. For example, some read “cedars of Lebanon” and “oaks of Bashan” (Isaiah 2:12–13) and see only trees in their mind’s eye. They do not recognize the symbolism of tall cedars and oaks representing proud people. Or some read “idols of gold” (Isaiah 2:20) and see only man-made statues. They do not realize that idols may signify any kind of false worship.

The book of Isaiah cannot be read like a newspaper, a letter, or a textbook. Symbolism is a key element of Isaiah’s text. It is part of every chapter and almost every verse. Through revelation, Isaiah drew upon the social, cultural, religious, and political background of the day to produce hundreds of different symbols. His symbols pertain to various aspects of life in the Holy Land: he wrote of the natural world, including animals, insects, plants, rocks, elements, and objects in the sky; he mentioned colors, numbers, foods, armor, and weaponry; he referred to persons, occupations, ecclesiastical offices, social relationships, and human anatomy; and he wrote of places and architecture.

This volume is not a scholarly work but is designed as an introduction to Isaiah for readers of all ages—families, students, teachers. Children can gain entry into the world of Isaiah through the pictures, and youth and adults through both commentary and

Right: A stand of cedars of Lebanon, east of Byblos, Lebanon.
pictures. The “How to Use This Book” section that follows describes how this book is organized.

It is hoped that the photographs, illustrations, and maps will enable readers of all ages to more easily visualize many of Isaiah’s teachings and prophecies. The photograph of a pruning hook (page 118) serves as an example. The pruning hook is a metal, knifelike instrument with a short, broad blade attached to a wooden handle. It is used for pruning vines and harvesting grapes. The pruning hook is similar to a spearhead, which also has a short, broad blade attached to a wooden handle. After viewing the photograph of the pruning hook, one can more easily comprehend how a spearhead can be beaten with a hammer and reshaped into a pruning hook. Isaiah’s prophecy, “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks” (Isaiah 2:4) takes on new meaning.

All but two or three of the photographs presented in this book were taken in the Holy Land. It seemed proper that the photos originate from Isaiah’s homeland and surrounding regions. Though much has changed in the Holy Land since Isaiah prophesied and ministered more than 2,700 years ago, a great deal remains the same. Shepherds gather their sheep into sheepfolds; grass grows on the rooftops of some dwellings; farmers use beasts of burden to plow their fields; olive trees grow throughout the Judean hills; donkeys pull carts loaded with goods; ancient watchtowers rise into the sky; Bedouin pitch their tents and ride camels; and the cities of Jerusalem, Damascus, and Bethlehem remain. The wilderness of Judea, the Sea of Galilee, and other prominent geographical features of the Holy Land have changed little since Isaiah’s time, and the same is fundamentally true of the Holy Land’s plants and animals. The photographs, taken in the Holy Land, attempt to capture as closely as possible the world Isaiah experienced during his ministry and drew upon as he wrote. If a person knows no more about Isaiah than what is presented here, he or she will have a good basic overview of some of the main religious concepts.

Below: Sheep near Bethphage. A black sheep, upper left, strays from the flock.
This book is composed of verses from Isaiah accompanied by commentary, pictures, captions, charts, and maps. Each of the parts is designed to give the reader further understanding of Isaiah and his world.

Selected Verses from Isaiah

The verses cited in this volume, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version of the Bible. The subject matter of the verses is illuminated by the commentary, pictures, and captions.

Commentary

The commentary, located immediately below the verses, consists of brief explanations and observations about the verses. The commentary, of course, does not represent the final word on any given matter, nor is it the only valid explanation. It is based on the author’s opinion and an understanding of the scriptures from the point of view of a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For complete context, full notes, comments, and bibliographic sources, see the author’s Understanding Isaiah as well as other books listed in the “Sources Consulted” section.

Pictures

One or more pictures accompany the verses from Isaiah. The pictures relate to specific words in the verses. For example, the picture of the Salt Lake Temple accompanies the verse about the “Lord’s house” being “established in the top of the mountains,” and the picture of the sand dunes near Gaza illustrates the “sand of the sea.”

Captions

These are placed next to the pictures. The captions provide details, often of cultural significance, about the pictures.

Charts

These are not directly related to the commentary, pictures, or captions; rather, they address ideas and events found throughout the book of Isaiah. They add information about Isaiah, his writings, or the world from which he came.

Maps

Isaiah’s book refers to more than one hundred different places, cities, and countries, such as Jerusalem, Damascus, Lebanon, Bashan, Assyria, Egypt, Moab, and Edom. The maps were made expressly for this volume to give the reader a location for the places mentioned in Isaiah’s writings. The maps are placed throughout the volume, correlating with general sections of the book and not with specific pictures and commentary on a particular page.

Sources Consulted

To make this volume easier to use and accessible to a wide range of readers, there are very few in-text citations. For those interested in documentation or more information on topics discussed in this volume, the bibliography offers several helpful sources.
Ancient Israel

In Isaiah’s time, the Holy Land consisted of two kingdoms, the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. Isaiah prophesied to his contemporaries in Jerusalem and other cities and villages in both kingdoms. He spoke against idolatrous practices, social injustices, and pride. He gave members of the kingdoms instructions on caring for the poor, widows, and fatherless. He invited them to repent and cleanse themselves through the power of the atonement. And he taught them the way to happiness and peace.

ISAIAH 1:1

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

According to Isaiah 1:1, Isaiah served as a prophet during the reign of several kings in Judah, including Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He had personal dealings with at least two of those kings. Many scholars believe that Isaiah’s ministry took place between 740 and 700 (or perhaps 699) B.C.—approximately forty years.

Isaiah’s name means “Jehovah is salvation.” How fitting that a man who devoted his life to testifying of the saving power of the Messiah should have a name that witnesses his testimony.

Isaiah’s wife is called “prophetess” in Isaiah’s record, suggesting that she too had the gift of revelation (Isaiah 8:3). Isaiah and his wife had at least two sons who also served as signs to Israel. “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts” (v. 18).

ISAIAH 1:3

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s [feeding-trough]; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

The ox and ass are beasts of burden that need an owner’s care and support. The Israelites, like the ox and ass, must rely on their master, God, for spiritual sustenance. The ox and ass are dumb animals, yet they still obey their master. The children of Israel do not always obey their master.

The terms “owner” and “master” are symbols that refer to the Lord, who is the owner and master of the people of Israel. The Hebrew for “owner” here means someone who has purchased an item rather than received it through other means such as inheriting it, being given it, or simply finding it. Christ is the purchaser. He purchased the church of God through his atoning sacrifice, accepting the role of caretaker and saving all humanity from sin and death. This idea is taught by Paul concerning the “church of God, which he [Jesus] hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:20).
ISAIAH 1:8

And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

The expression “daughter of Zion” refers to the city of Jerusalem as well as to its inhabitants (Lamentations 1:6–8; 2:10; Zechariah 9:9). All that remains in Jerusalem after its destruction are cottages and huts. Jerusalem, which once housed the mighty spiritual fortress—God’s temple—is now like a cottage. This is a symbolic as well as a literal warning to those who forsake the Lord in the latter days.

ISAIAH 3:1, 8

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, . . . 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.

Isaiah prophesies in this chapter that anarchy and ruin will come upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah because of their sinful nature (Isaiah 3:1–12).

He likens their sins to those committed in Sodom before its destruction: “The show of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not.” Isaiah adds, “Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves” (Isaiah 3:9).

Isaiah’s words were certainly fulfilled, as history attests. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in about 587 B.C. and again in A.D. 70 by the Romans. Despite Jerusalem’s centuries of ruin, its citizens of the last days have much to look forward to. Isaiah prophesies that in the last days, Jerusalem’s waste places will be rebuilt, and the Lord will comfort his people and redeem Jerusalem. Isaiah writes: “Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem” (Isaiah 52:9).

ISAIAH 5:1–2

My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: 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.

These verses are part of the Song of the Vineyard. The song is about a caring master who shows great concern and love for his vineyard. The master is the Lord and the vineyard is the house of Israel, the Lord’s covenant people. Grapes become plump, juicy, and sweet when the master of the vineyard has planted them in a fertile hill, removed stones and weeds, and prepared for the harvest. Members of the house of Israel, too, can flourish with the master’s care.

Those who do not respond to care, however, become like wild or rotten grapes, which symbolize corrupt or evil people (Hosea 9:10). They will not partake of the atonement and abide in Christ. They will be trodden down by the Lord in great fury at his second coming, staining his robe red (D&C 133:50–51).
Those who follow Christ will bring forth good fruit (John 15). God made Israel the "choicest vine" so that it would be fruitful and become a righteous people among the nations. He built a tower in the vineyard so that watchmen, including the prophets, could watch for impending danger and then warn the children of Israel (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:1–7; D&C 101:43–62). He also made a winepress in anticipation of a great harvest.

ISAIAH 7:3

Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.

Shear-jashub was a son of Isaiah and the prophetess and the elder brother of Maher-shalal-hash-baz. In Hebrew, his name means "a remnant shall return." (For examples of other names that are signs, see Hosea 1:6–9.) As his name suggests, the boy was to become a living symbol to the Jews (Isaiah 8:18), a reminder to the Israelites that a remnant would return to their land and their God (Isaiah 6:11–13).

The Lord commanded Isaiah to take Shear-jashub with him to meet King Ahaz at the upper pool, probably near the Gihon Spring in the valley of Kidron. Ahaz may have been at the pool with his officers to check Jerusalem's water supply in anticipation of the siege by Assyria. The Lord, who knew Ahaz's location, inspired Isaiah and his son to go there.

ISAIAH 7:8

Within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.

What was happening in the political world of Isaiah's time? Assyria, the enemy of Israel, had embarked on a ruthless campaign to expand its borders. Isaiah's specific prophecy that in "threescore and five years" Ephraim, or the northern kingdom of Israel, would no longer be a kingdom or a nation was fulfilled. Ephraim fell in 721 B.C., midway through Isaiah's ministry.

King Sargon II of Assyria deported most of Ephraim's citizens, some of the ten tribes of Israel, to the north countries. The author of the book of Kings reports on the attack on Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdoms: "Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria" (2 Kings 17:5–6).

The deportation of ancient Israel occurred because of the people's great sins. "For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God ... And walked in the statutes of the heathen. ... And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God" (vv. 7–10). Years later King Sennacherib campaigned against Judah, defeating many cities and villages, and again deporting many of its citizens.

ISAIAH 9:9–10
And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.

In Isaiah chapters 9 and 10, the prophet foretells the doom of the northern kingdom of Israel because of its great pride. The Lord’s word, which applies to both ancient and modern Israel, has been given to the house of Israel through the prophets (Isaiah 9:8). Because the people do not seek the Lord, and because they are hypocrites, lie, and do evil, he will destroy all levels of society, including its leaders, followers, false prophets, and young men (vv. 13–17).

Verses 18 and 19 describe this destruction by fire with such terms as “burneth,” “fire,” “devour,” “kindle,” “mount up like the lifting up of;” “land darkened” (perhaps because of the smoke), and “fuel of the fire.” In addition, social chaos will rule and brotherly love will not be found, for family will fight against family, and tribe will war against tribe (vv. 19–21). Those who make unrighteous and oppressive laws as well as those who forget the poor, the widows, and the fatherless will also suffer at the day of judgment and will be among the captives or slain. They will not be able to flee for help to other sources such as idols or other nations. (Isaiah 10:1–4.)

In Isaiah 9:9–10, the Lord speaks specifically regarding the pride of the people. They speak with “pride and stoutness of heart.” The people believe that if they are destroyed, then they will rebuild their homes with stronger, hewn stones and they will replant with finer trees, such as cedars.

ISAIAH 22:9–11

Ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. . . . Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.

Jerusalem’s inhabitants prepared for impending war against the armies of Elam and Kir by building up a weapons inventory, fortifying the city’s walls, taking a census to determine how many men of fighting age were available to defend the city, and preparing the city’s water supply (Isaiah 22:8–11). The “lower pool” mentioned in verse 9 refers to the pool at the southern end of Hezekiah’s Tunnel, an engineering marvel that permitted Jerusalem’s inhabitants to safely obtain water during a siege.

Jerusalem relied for security on its weapons and preparations for war rather than on its Maker. In a pivotal clause Isaiah states: “But ye have not looked unto the maker thereof” (v. 11). Jehovah is the Maker (Hosea 8:14; D&C 30:2), the great Architect who fashioned Jerusalem long ago. Isaiah’s words compare God, who was the city’s original builder, to those who attempted to build Jerusalem through repairs, fortifications, and water channels.

During this period of impending battle, Judah should have been fasting, praying, worshiping in the temple, and seeking God’s word through the prophets. Note the terminology Isaiah uses as he explains Judah’s reliance on worldly might instead of heavenly powers. Jerusalem’s inhabitants did “look” to their armories (Isaiah 22:8), but they had “not looked unto” Jehovah, their Maker (v. 11).
ISAIAH 27:9

By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged . . . when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.

Isaiah gives the sign by which it will be known that the people of Jacob, or the house of Israel, will be purged of sin. Jacob will crush the stones of the altars of false worship into pieces as if they were chalk stone and knock down the groves and images.

Chalk stone is a soft stone that crumbles easily and quickly dissolves in rain. Beaten chalk stone symbolizes the complete destruction of the altars of idolatry. When Israel's inhabitants destroy all forms of idolatry and false worship from their land and hearts, as if making all the stones of the idolatrous altars into chalk stone, then their iniquity will also be purged.

ISAIAH 28:1

Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower.

Isaiah denounces the northern kingdom, Ephraim, pronouncing upon its people woe, or severe anguish and distress, resulting from God's judgments. The "crown of pride" is Samaria, the capital of Ephraim. Its walled city stood on a hill, perhaps presenting the image of a crown, and its people were full of pride (Isaiah 9:9).

Isaiah accuses Samaria of drunkenness (Isaiah 28:1, 3), and Ephraim is also singled out for drunkenness in Hosea 7:5, 14. Not simply literal drunkenness is condemned here but also the spiritual drunkenness of sin and apostasy. Samaria was a flourishing and glorious community, but its time of glory passed away like a fading flower.

ISAIAH 30:13

Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

Isaiah compares ancient Judah's iniquity to a large crack in the outside wall that protects Jerusalem. The crack expands, weakening the wall until it suddenly crumbles. Similarly, Judah's inhabitants have been weakened through sin. Their iniquity increases, like the crack in the wall, until their enemies are able to enter through the breach and destroy their nation. This excellent description illustrates the effect of sin on all. Even a little sin, not repented of, can be like a crack in a wall, which can grow larger and larger until it leads to spiritual destruction.

ISAIAH 30:14

And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit.
In Isaiah 30:1–17, the prophet lists sins of ancient Judah. The nation does not take counsel from the Lord, does not pray to the Lord, trusts Egypt and its horses rather than the Lord, carries its riches to Egypt, rejects the prophets and seers and desires them to prophesy “smooth things” and lies, and despises God’s word.

In verse 14, Isaiah likens the destruction of Judah to a shattered clay vessel that can no longer serve its original purpose. Not a single shard, a fragment of the shattered vessel, is large enough to serve as a scoop “to take fire from the hearth” or “to take water” from a pool. Similarly, Judah’s sinful inhabitants are not suitable to serve as God’s holy people in any way.

**ISAIAH 32:14**

*Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks.*

Isaiah prophesies of a time when palaces and cities are forsaken and left desolate, and forts and towers become dwelling places for animals. He is probably referring to the city of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah during the Babylonian captivity and exile. During this period, Jerusalem’s inhabitants were killed, forced to flee, or taken captive, and the once crowded city was partially abandoned. The fortifications and towers throughout Judah became dwelling places for animals.

**ISAIAH 36:7**

*Is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away?*

The son of Ahaz and Abi, Hezekiah became king at twenty-five and reigned twenty-nine years. Hezekiah was a righteous man who “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord . . . and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments” (2 Kings 18:3, 6). As king, Hezekiah made a number of religious reforms among his people. He “removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it” (2 Kings 18:4). Because of his righteousness and religious reforms, the author of second Kings wrote this tribute to him: “He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him” (2 Kings 18:5).

**ISAIAH 37:14–15**

*And Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord.*

While tens of thousands of Assyrian soldiers waited to destroy Jerusalem’s inhabitants, Hezekiah petitioned the Lord through prayer. In the house of the Lord, he prayed, “O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which
hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their
countries” (Isaiah 37:16–18).

In response to Hezekiah’s humble prayer, the Lord sent his prophet Isaiah to the king and promised deliverance
from the Assyrians. Isaiah assured Hezekiah that Jerusalem’s inhabitants need not fear, for the Lord would not
permit the Assyrians to enter the city of Jerusalem (v. 34). The Lord heard Hezekiah’s prayer and sent an angel,
who destroyed 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp, saving Hezekiah and his people (v. 36).

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today may liken this passage from Isaiah to
themselves. All Saints may go to the temple with their cares and challenges, whether small or great, and seek God’s
help through prayer. He will provide answers to their prayers and bless their lives, just as he did for Hezekiah and
the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

ISAIAH 38:12–14

Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd’s tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut
me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. . . . Like a crane or a swallow, so
did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward.

Isaiah 38:1–8 relates that Hezekiah, king of Judah, is sick to the point that he will soon die. The Lord has warned
him, “Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live” (v. 1). After Hezekiah prayed and wept much, the
Lord showed mercy unto him and postponed his death for fifteen years. The king, to show his gratitude to the Lord,
wrote a psalm portraying his humility, meekness, and reliance upon the Lord (vv. 9–20). The two verses cited above
are part of his psalm.

The king writes: “Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd’s tent: I have cut off like a weaver
my life.” Hezekiah means that his life would end as easily as a shepherd dismantles his tent or as quickly as a
weaver cuts and gathers finished fabric from a loom. The expression “like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did
mourn as a dove” indicates that Hezekiah’s pleadings with the Lord were at times loud, as a crane’s cry, at other
times soft, as a swallow’s chirp, and on occasion mournful, as a dove’s cooing.

ISAIAH 44:28

I am the Lord . . . that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to
Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Isaiah prophesies concerning Cyrus approximately two hundred years before Cyrus ruled Babylon. Cyrus was the
king who freed the people of Israel from political bondage and provided a way for them to return to their
homeland to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

Interestingly, the Jewish historian Josephus, writing only a few years after the crucifixion of Christ, recorded how
Cyrus learned that he should permit the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. “This was known to
Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had
spoken thus to him in a secret vision: — ’My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple.’ This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was so written” (Antiquities of the Jews, 11.1.1–2).

All that the Lord promised concerning Cyrus was accomplished, including the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple (2 Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:1–2; Isaiah 46:10).

**ISAIAH 63:11–14**

Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? . . . That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

This passage is part of the Psalm of Mercy (Isaiah 63:7–14). This beautiful psalm shows the Lord’s loving-kindness, great goodness, and mercy to the repentant. Isaiah notes that the Lord claims faithful Israel as his people and his children. He was not only a father but a Savior (v. 8). He bore their afflictions, redeemed them “in his love and in his pity,” and carried them in their time of need (v. 9).

The faithful of Israel remember the Lord’s goodness to their ancestors in the time of Moses. He had led them (an idea repeated three times in vv. 11–13) and blessed them with his Spirit and, by implication, he will do so again (v. 14).

Isaiah’s image of a horse in the wilderness creates a beautiful comparison with the Lord’s leading the children of Israel through the wilderness. The horse symbolizes how the Lord took ancient Israel safely through the deep, or the waters of the Red Sea. A horse in the wilderness is sure and steady of foot, especially when it is being led. In the same way, the Lord helped Israel to flee Egypt into the wilderness with steadiness, without faltering. The valley represents a place where beasts find water and grass, the sustenance they need. In the same way, the Lord makes all his children to “lie down in green pastures” (Psalm 23:2). While in the valley the Lord gave ancient Israel rest from bondage, rest from care, peace of heart, and peace of conscience, which are gifts of the Spirit. He will do the same for all his righteous children, in any age.
Ancient Israel's Neighbors


ISAIAH 2:16

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

Tarshish, the precise location of which is unknown, was probably a prosperous and bustling Mediterranean seaport. Through Tarshish, Solomon imported luxury items, including gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks (1 Kings 10:22). Perhaps because of the city's wealth and affluence, the destruction of Tarshish and its ships symbolizes the Lord's judgment on the proud and arrogant (Psalm 48:7; Isaiah 23:1, 14).

ISAIAH 7:18

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

The fly and the bee often symbolize fighting soldiers (Deuteronomy 1:44; Psalm 118:12). These symbols are well chosen because "the flooding of the Nile brought . . . swarms of flies," and "the hill districts of Assyria were well known for their bees" (J. Alec Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary, 89).

In this case, Isaiah prophesies that the Lord will prompt the Assyrian armies, here referred to as "bees," to come down on Judah. Judah's punishment comes because of wickedness. That the "Lord shall hiss" to the bees is a symbol built on an actual ancient practice. The word "hiss" can also mean whistle (Isaiah 5:30). Cyrillus of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 400) wrote about beekeepers who whistled to bees to get them to return to their hives (John D. Watts, Isaiah 1–33, 107).

ISAIAH 7:20

In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired . . . by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard.

Isaiah prophesies that Assyria will invade Israel (Isaiah 7:17–25). His prophecy, set forth in symbolic terms, declares that Assyria would occupy the entire land. Assyria's intent would be to humiliate and strip Israel of its dignity, make it poverty-stricken, and deport its citizens from the land. Isaiah records that the Lord would use a razor to shave the head, beard, and hair of the feet of members of the house of Israel. The razor represents the
Assyrian king and his armies who customarily forced war prisoners to become slaves, and then humiliated and dishonored them by shaving them from head to toe.

The Assyrian invasion came upon members of the house of Israel because most of the people rejected the Lord and turned to idolatry and other gross sins.

ISAIAH 7:23–25

And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall even be for briers and thorns. . . . And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

This verse is part of Isaiah’s prophecy regarding the impending Assyrian warfare against the kingdom of Judah (Isaiah 7:17–25). Because of the desolation of warfare, the vineyards would become neglected and overrun with thorns and briers (vv. 23–24). The farmlands that had once been cultivated, “digged with the mattock,” would also be abandoned and become a pastureland for cattle and sheep (v. 25).

Isaiah prophesies that the fruits of the land would be lost with Assyria’s invasion. The richest vines would become worthless, and briers and thorns would be found in place of vineyards.

ISAIAH 8:6–7

Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah’s son; Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria.

Isaiah describes and then contrasts two forms of waters, the “waters of Shiloah” and “the waters of the river.” The soft, rolling waters of Shiloah flow near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. They are controlled and inviting and bring life to those who drink them.

The waters of Shiloah represent Jesus, the King of Heaven, who is likened to the fountain of righteousness (Psalm 36:8–9; 1 Nephi 2:9; Ether 12:28).

The waters of the river represent the king of Assyria, who leads his great, destructive armies “like a flood” to “cover the earth” and “destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof” (Jeremiah 46:8).

Because the inhabitants of Judah rejected Jesus, the Lord sent against them the king of Assyria, or the strong and mighty waters of the river that would overflow its banks and cover the entire land with destruction.

ISAIAH 10:5–6
O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

To fulfill his divine purposes, the Lord sends Assyria’s wicked king and his armies to war against Israel. The Lord is actively engaged in this process. “I will send him,” he says. The Lord controls all nations and their armies. “Do I not hold the destinies of all the armies of the nations of the earth?” he asks (D&C 117:6).

The Lord uses the wicked to destroy a people who have forsaken the covenant and committed spiritual adultery by worshiping foreign gods. Assyria represents the Lord’s rod of anger, which is used to punish the apostate Israelites. They had apostatized from the truth and were the “people of [God’s] wrath.” Assyria’s army would trample and tread Israel’s wicked in the deep mud, or mire.

ISAIAH 10:14

And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

This prophecy pertains to Assyria’s conquest of ancient Israel (Isaiah 10:5–19). Israel is compared to a bird’s nest, eggs, wings, and call. (See 3 Nephi 10:4–6; D&C 10:65; 29:1–2 for other examples of bird symbolism.) The eggs in the nest represent Israel’s riches, which Assyria has raided. Israel’s inability to move its wings or to make a peep signifies that it, like a little chick, is helpless before Assyria’s ravening armies.

ISAIAH 10:15

Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?

To fulfill his divine purposes, the Lord sent Assyria’s wicked king and his armies to war against Israel. Assyria became the ax and saw in the Lord’s hand, used to cut down the apostate Israelites, namely, those who had forsaken the covenant and committed spiritual adultery by worshiping foreign deities. However, Assyria and its king were proud enough to believe that they were greater than God, not realizing they were really tools in God’s hand.

ISAIAH 14:22–23

For I will rise up . . . and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the Lord. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the [broom] of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts.
Isaiah prophesies that God would put an end to Babylon, the great city of ancient Babylonia known for its huge walls, celebrated gardens and parks, and beautiful temples. Babylon’s destruction would be so great that both “son” and “nephew”—those who would produce additional generations to inhabit Babylon—would be destroyed.

Isaiah’s words were fulfilled in 539 B.C. when Cyrus, king of Persia, defeated Babylon together with its evil rulers and residents. How complete was Babylon's destruction? The Lord said, “I will sweep it with the broom of destruction.” Just as one sweeps a house to eliminate dust and dirt, so God swept Babylon of its foulness so that nothing, not even dust, remained. Its temples and gardens are gone, and Babylon now stands in ruins, a testimony that Isaiah’s words were fulfilled.

Babylon is a perfect example of an evil place that was destroyed by the power of God. As such, Babylon is a type and a shadow of the wicked world that will be destroyed by God’s power in the last days (D&C 1:16).

ISAIAH 21:15

*For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war.*

The setting of Isaiah 21:15 is Tema, an oasis and important caravan stop on an ancient trade route on the Arabian peninsula. It was approximately two hundred fifty miles southeast of Aqaba. Isaiah speaks concerning the inhabitants of Tema who fled from a fierce battle that destroyed much of Tema’s population. Their flight from both “drawn sword” and “bent bow” suggests they escaped from the heat of the battle.

The bow was a weapon used among many peoples in antiquity. Isaiah referred to the bow in several of his prophecies (Isaiah 5:28; 7:24; 13:18; 41:2; 66:19). In almost every instance, the bow alludes to war.

ISAIAH 23:1–3

*The burden of Tyre . . . Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a market place of nations.*

Tyre and Zidon (sometimes spelled Sidon) were famous Phoenician cities noted for their commerce, great wealth, and materialism. Tyre was so well-known by Mediterranean trading nations that it was called a mart, or market place, of nations. Its traders and merchants were so celebrated that they were equated with the “princes” and the “honorable of the earth” (Isaiah 23:8).

Zidon’s merchants carried corn, dyed cloth, grain, wine, metal, horses, wood, and oil as they voyaged on the seas. Tyre was supported, or replenished, by Zidon’s trading. The “seed of Sihor” refers to the grain produced near Sihor, and the “harvest of the river” likely refers to the great fishing industry in both Tyre and Zidon.

The Lord spoke against Tyre and its inhabitants, decrying its pride by calling it a harlot. He also warned its inhabitants to repent, or the city would become desolate. Tyre’s inhabitants did not listen to the prophet and were destroyed. (vv. 16–18.)
Like many modern cities, the primary interests of the inhabitants of Tyre lie in obtaining material wealth. If modern cities’ inhabitants are proud, glory in wickedness, and sell themselves to the ways of the world—they will share Tyre’s fate. They will be destroyed when the Lord returns to the earth with great glory. Tyre, then, serves as a warning of the pitfalls of pride and materialism.

**ISAIAH 36:1**

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.

While Hezekiah served as king over Judah, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria (704–681 B.C.), and his armies captured most of the fortified cities of Judah. This occurred during the “fourteenth year of king Hezekiah,” or approximately 701 B.C., the later years of Isaiah’s ministry. After capturing most of the cities, Sennacherib sent his armies to Jerusalem to demand tribute and to inform Judah of the terms of surrender, which included the peoples’ deportation (Isaiah 36:2, 8, 16–17).

**ISAIAH 37:27**

Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

The great Assyrian nation, with its fierce and well-disciplined armies, destroyed other equally evil nations. During Isaiah’s ministry, Assyria laid waste many nations, including the northern kingdom of Israel. The inhabitants of these conquered nations were powerless before the Assyrian army, as weak as fragile herbs before the scorching desert wind or as the grass on the housetops that cannot find root (Psalms 37:2; 90:5–6; Isaiah 40:6–8).

This scenario of Assyria at war anticipates the warring nations of the latter days, who will contend for land, power, and riches. They will thirst for blood. But as Assyria, its leaders, and its armies were destroyed according to God’s plan, so also will the warring nations of the last days be annihilated at the second coming. Meanwhile, a righteous remnant of Israel will be saved as they worship in temples and obey God’s words.

**ISAIAH 41:25**

He shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.

This passage refers to King Cyrus of Persia, whom the Lord raised up to be a conqueror. Cyrus’s military campaigns were so successful that he conquered the Medes, Lydians, and Babylonians and their dynasties of powerful princes and kings. Cyrus trod on kings and princes as easily as a potter treads on his clay to prepare it for his work.
This passage also refers to Jesus Christ. In ancient days, Israel was in bondage to an earthly conqueror, Babylon, but God called up Cyrus to deliver Israel. Today all people are in bondage, but their enslavement is to sin, false tradition, and death. In his great power, God has sent a deliverer in Jesus Christ. The Savior has the power to set people free spiritually if they will turn to him and accept his atonement. But to receive his blessing, they must be willing to submit to him, even as the clay does to the potter.

ISAIAH 45:2

*I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.*

The end of Isaiah 44 and the beginning of Isaiah 45 speak of Cyrus, king of Persia, who is called the Lord's "shepherd" and "anointed." The Lord addresses Cyrus, although not yet born, calling him by name and appointing him to serve as a deliverer of captive Israel (Isaiah 45:1–2).

The Lord prepared the way for Cyrus to deliver ancient Israel, which was held captive by the Babylonians, by opening doors and making rough places smooth (vv. 1–2). In the same way, the Lord will open doors and prepare the way for his covenant people of the latter days to overcome sin. God exercised his power to break even the most imposing barriers—crooked places, gates of brass, and bars of iron—that stood in Cyrus's way. In a similar manner, God will exercise power to remove the barriers that prevent his followers from doing his will, if they will trust in him.

ISAIAH 47:2

*Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh.*

Isaiah describes the work of a female slave who uses a millstone to grind meal. She has to keep her hair from her face, as well as tie up her skirts to keep hair and clothing from hindering her work. This work of the female slave symbolizes the servitude into which Babylon, the wicked world, would be forced. It would be the end of a life of decadence.

Babylon was forced to serve its masters when it fell. The wicked serve their master, Satan. Satan promises the wicked a life of pleasure but delivers only bondage and pain. Only righteousness brings lasting rewards.
Warnings to the Wicked

ISAIAH 1:30

For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.

The two metaphors here, the oak and the garden, symbolize what will happen to the wicked. Because the wicked have chosen to worship idols that are associated with oaks and gardens, they will become, in a sense, what they have worshiped (Isaiah 1:29). They will be as valueless as an oak tree that is dying or diseased, “an oak whose leaf fadeth,” or as unfruitful and worthless as “a garden that hath no water.”

The oak tree that lacks water soon shrivels up and becomes kindling for fire. A dry garden is in a similar state. The wicked will be like kindling for the fire accompanying the second coming of Jesus that will burn all corruptible things. Spiritually, Jesus represents the living water (Isaiah 33:21; Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13; John 4:6–14). By partaking of this living water, the righteous will be spiritually quenched rather than desolate.

ISAIAH 5:11

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

This passage indicates revelry and unholy merrymaking among those who spend time in immoral entertainment. It warns all against making strong drink their passion. A passage from the Book of Mormon presents a prophecy that corresponds in some ways to this verse of Isaiah: “There shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us” (2 Nephi 28:7). But these are “false and vain and foolish doctrines” (Isaiah 5:9).

ISAIAH 5:12

And the harp, and the viol, the [tambourine], and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.

Harps, tambourines, and other instruments were played in antiquity (Genesis 4:21; Psalm 137:2) and are mentioned in Isaiah’s prophecies (Isaiah 5:12; 24:8). The King James Version of the Bible uses the word “tabret,” which is usually translated “tambourine” in modern English Bibles.

Instruments were used in worship. They were also played at banquets and feasts where merrymakers partook of wine and strong drink and participated in revelries. Apparently, harlots played their harps as they wandered around the city attempting to attract attention (Isaiah 23:16).
ISAIAH 5:18

Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope.

This verse creates an image of a beast of burden, such as a donkey or ox, pulling a cart of goods. The beast represents a wicked person and the cart represents sin. The wicked are burdened with sins, which they drag behind them, just as a beast of burden hauls its load from place to place.

The verse also suggests that vanity is the key component from which the cords are made. Many commit sins and then drag them after themselves because of vanity and pride. Sin is sometimes as difficult to break as a thick rope that is strong enough to pull a cart, but it is possible to break sin with the help of Christ. The Lord says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

ISAIAH 13:14

And it shall be as the chased roe and as a sheep that no man taketh up.

Isaiah compares deer and sheep in precarious situations to wicked people during the judgments of the last days. A “chased roe” is a hunted deer, and “sheep that no man taketh up” are vulnerable because their shepherds are absent. The imagery implies that the wicked will be like hunted deer. They will flee for their lives during a time of wars.

ISAIAH 22:15–16

Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna . . . and say, what hast thou here? . . . that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?

Isaiah speaks of a historical character, Shebna, who was Isaiah's contemporary and likely acquainted with him. Shebna was an important and influential government official or treasurer who served in the court of Hezekiah, king of Judah (Isaiah 22:15; 37:2). Shebna, a proud, wealthy man, is rebuked by the Lord for his arrogance in building himself a monumental tomb.

Shebna apparently had prepared a sepulcher in a high and conspicuous place, a monument to himself for all to view. In doing so, he was setting himself up “on high.” Therefore, Isaiah prophesies that a judgment will fall upon the treasurer’s head. Shebna would lose his important position in the kingdom of Judah. He would be violently carried into captivity, his glory would become shame, and he would die in exile (vv. 17–19).

The location of Shebna's sepulcher is unknown, although some scholars place it with other tombs carved in rock in the valley of Kidron, east of Jerusalem. Shebna symbolizes all proud and arrogant people.
ISAIAH 25:11–12

He shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust.

Jehovah plays an active role in the events that will occur during the last days and at his second coming. This is set forth in Isaiah 25:6–12 and other passages. In verse 11, Isaiah prophesies that the Lord will bring down the pride of the wicked, along with the spoil, or the things they have gained through treacherous deeds. (See Proverbs 16:18 for another description of the fate of the proud.)

In verse 12, Isaiah prophesies that the fortresses of the wicked—symbolic of reliance on military might, the arm of flesh, and worldly powers—will be destroyed. To emphasize the completeness of their destruction, Isaiah uses repetitive language: “bring down,” “lay low,” “bring down to the ground,” and “to the dust.”

ISAIAH 28:20

For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.

This verse pertains to Isaiah’s prophecy that the Assyrian army would scourge the southern kingdom of Judah (Isaiah 28:14–22). This scourge would come because of Judah’s wicked practices and failure to recognize that Jehovah is God and King. The scourge would come day and night, and when the inhabitants heard of it, they would be visibly frightened.

Isaiah compares the fear of Judah’s inhabitants to one who lies in his bed but cannot find comfort. In the same way that a small bed is too short for a tall person or a small blanket does not adequately cover an adult, the wicked would not find adequate calm or protection from the Assyrian scourge.

ISAIAH 46:1

Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast.

The term “idols” refers both to heathen deities constructed of wood, stone, or other materials and to more abstract things that people worship. People may become excessively devoted to wealth, the honor of men, or worldly things. Isaiah also speaks of idols in Isaiah 2:8, 18, 20; 10:10–11; 19:1, 3; and 31:7. The law of Moses speaks clearly against the creation and worship of idols (Exodus 20:3–4).

In the belief system of the Babylonians, Bel and Nebo were two chief gods. Bel was the father of all other gods. Nebo was the god of learning and wisdom. Idols representing these gods had no power to help themselves against the encroachments of enemies. They were carried away on the backs of beasts into captivity and could not prevent it (Isaiah 46:1–2). The idols were equally powerless to help the people who worshiped them.
In contrast to the idols, Jehovah carries his people “from the womb,” and he continues to carry them “even to [their] old age” (vv. 3–4). While the idols have no power to deliver even themselves, Jehovah delivers his people (vv. 2, 4). The idol worshipers may spend a fortune on their images, but idols cannot help them in their time of “trouble” (vv. 6–7).

**ISAIAH 46:6**

They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and they hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship.

Idol worshipers from biblical times would sometimes hire a smith to make a god from gold or silver. They would pray to it and show reverence to it. Occasionally, priests and worshipers built temples to house their idols and offered them sacrifices.

Despite the attention paid to idols, and though they are often made of precious materials, they still have no power (Isaiah 44:15–17). They cannot “answer, nor save him out of his trouble” (Isaiah 46:7).

**ISAIAH 50:11**

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

People who kindle and walk in the light of their own fire are those who walk in their own way. They act according to their own will, rather than according to the will and direction of the Lord. They seek to be spiritually self-sufficient, relying on themselves instead of on God. They attempt to create their own light, but their efforts produce no more than short-lived sparks compared to the everlasting bright light that comes from God. Sadly, they deny themselves his greater light. Such will eventually be judged by the Lord, resulting in sorrow.

**ISAIAH 56:10**

His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

Watchmen are those, particularly leaders, who know the gospel and are charged to protect it from apostasy (Ezekiel 3:17). In this passage, the watchmen themselves have become apostates. Isaiah refers to these negligent watchmen as ineffectual dogs and shepherds. Like watchdogs who have become lazy, blind, and inept, or like shepherds who are no longer able to recognize the enemy, these watchmen have left off caring for their flock. They have turned instead to caring for their own needs and desires. (See Ezekiel 34:1–28 for a detailed description of indolent shepherds and the Lord’s reaction to them).
The Lord’s criticism of these unrighteous leaders is scathing. He calls them blind watchmen, “ignorant,” “dumb dogs,” “greedy dogs,” and “shepherds that cannot understand” (Isaiah 56:10–11). Besides describing Israel’s religious leaders in ancient times, this prophecy may also refer to leaders of modern-day apostate religions (2 Nephi 28:3–9; Mormon 8:31–33, 37–39).

**ISAIAH 57:20**

*The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

The Lord promises peace to the righteous. “Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him” (Isaiah 57:19). The wicked do not have this promise. In fact, the Lord says, “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (v. 21). Isaiah uses the image of a troubled sea to describe the condition of the wicked. He indicates that their life is similar to the mire and dirt that is cast up by stormy waters.

**ISAIAH 59:10**

*We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night.*

Those who have turned from the light, at least in their hearts, are unable to find their way through life. They are like the blind, or like those who have no eyes at all. Consequently, night and noon are the same to them. Spiritual brightness and darkness are indistinguishable to those who have no spiritual eyes. This is the fulfillment of a curse pronounced on the wicked by the Lord (Deuteronomy 28:28–29). The Lord has power to heal this spiritual blindness if those who suffer will repent and return unto him.

**ISAIAH 59:11**

*We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.*

Ancient Israel’s anguished laments are sometimes loud like the angry roaring or growling of bears. Sometimes they are soft and subdued, like the sad moaning of doves. Why does Israel, or any person, suffer such distress? Anguish often comes because of wickedness and its fruits. Even when they inflict themselves, the wicked become angry at the troubles of sin. The passage in Isaiah 59:12–13 speaks concerning Israel’s “transgressions,” “sins,” “iniquities,” “transgressing,” “lying,” “departing away from our God,” “speaking oppression,” “revolt,” and “falsehood.”

**ISAIAH 65:4**

*… which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels.*
In Isaiah 65:2–5, the Lord lists transgressions of his ancient covenant people: they do not walk in God’s ways, their works are evil, they walk after their own thoughts, they provoke God to anger, they sacrifice in gardens, they burn incense on altars of brick, they lodge in cemeteries, they eat the flesh of swine, they pollute their vessels, and they say to others, “I am holier than thou.”

Many of their transgressions represent clear violations of the laws God gave through Moses. For example, the statement “remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments” may refer to an effort to communicate with the spirits of the dead, an action forbidden by Mosaic law (Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:10–12; Isaiah 8:19). The statement “eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abominable things” describes another violation of Mosaic law (Leviticus 11:7–8; Deuteronomy 14:7–8). The people were eating unclean animals or unclean sacrificial flesh (Leviticus 7:18; 19:7). And the statement “broth of abominable things is in their vessels” refers to people making their pots, pans, and dishes unclean by eating foods forbidden by the Lord.
Blessings and Duties of the Righteous

One of Isaiah’s major themes is that God requires righteousness of his people. The prophet admonishes the people to “prepare,” fast,” “gather,” and be clean. Parallel to these instructions are the blessings that come to those who obey: they will have “peace . . . as a river,” they will “not hunger or thirst,” and “the Lord shall guide” them.

**ISAIAH 1:16**

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil.

The term “wash” may refer to members of the priesthood washing their hands and feet with water before entering the temple. This was practiced in biblical times (Exodus 29:4). It also points to baptism, which is a ritual cleansing from sins and transgressions (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:51). Ultimately, washing with water represents symbolic washing with the blood of Christ to become spiritually clean.

**ISAIAH 25:2**

For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.

Those who survive the judgments and the destructions upon the earth, as set forth in Isaiah 24, will praise the Lord, perhaps in prayer or song. Isaiah provides the words of a hymn of praise in Isaiah 25:1–5. The hymn includes words that bring Isaiah’s readers great comfort: Jehovah is Israel’s “strength” and “refuge from the storm.” He is the “shadow from the heat.” He is always there when his children need him, whether for spiritual protection or physical safety. The hymn begins

O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. (v. 1)

Then follow expressions that speak of God making a city into a “heap” and a “ruin.”

For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. (v. 2)

“City” here refers to all cities wherein wickedness reigns. It appears in the singular form, perhaps recalling the ancient city of Babylon, which represents worldliness (D&C 1:16). The righteous will praise God’s name and the “wonderful things” he has done, including destroying Babylon or cities that are like Babylon in their wickedness.

**ISAIAH 33:4**
And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar.

Isaiah 33:2–6 is a wonderful prayer from the righteous to the Lord. Its words exemplify how Saints may praise and worship the Lord. It sets forth the attributes of God, including his graciousness, strength, salvation, exaltation, justice, and righteousness. The prayer begins with the words: “O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble” (v. 2).

Verse 4 of the prayer has an interesting image of a caterpillar gathering sustenance for itself: “And your spoil shall be like the gathering of the caterpillar.” “Spoil” generally refers to goods taken from an enemy during war. In this context it may refer to spiritual benefits, including peace, joy, and love, that the righteous receive as they partake of the Lord’s salvation. The righteous, then, pray that they will receive this spiritual spoil just as the caterpillar gathers sustenance.

ISAIAH 40:3

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

The “voice of him that crieth in the wilderness” is that of John the Baptist, who during his mortal ministry cried repentance to the people (John 1:6–24; Mark 1:1–8; Luke 1:76–79). The “voice” also pertains to others besides John (D&C 33:10; 88:66).

The statement “prepare ye the way of the Lord” is a commission to prepare for the coming of the Lord by crying repentance and gathering a people sufficiently prepared by covenant and ordinance to receive him (Malachi 3:1; Luke 3:4–10 JST; D&C 84:28). John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord’s first coming. John also prepared the way of the Lord when he appeared to Joseph Smith to restore the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood. This commenced the preparation for the Lord’s second coming (D&C 13).

The phrase “make straight in the desert a highway for our God” also means “prepare the way of the Lord.” The people of the last days are to prepare for the second coming by making the path back to God’s presence level or smooth. In other words, they are to remove obstacles so that others can be obedient to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

ISAIAH 40:31

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.

These four beautiful promises, “renew,” “mount up,” “run,” and “walk,” are directed to those who “wait upon the Lord,” or seek righteousness. The promises certainly pertain to the physical body (D&C 89:20). They also deal with the mind and spirit, which are continually renewed as his servants seek the Lord through righteous living and obedience to his commandments. The Lord’s servants are compared to the eagle—they will be spiritually powerful and sustained.
ISAIAH 41:19–20

*I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.*

The seven trees Isaiah lists represent righteous people. (See Psalm 1:1–3 for another instance of trees representing people.) Seven is a symbolic number that denotes wholeness or completion. These trees “see,” “know,” “consider,” and “understand” together. Note the Lord’s interest in the trees and his active role with them. He “will plant” and “will set” the trees in the wilderness so that all will know “the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.”

ISAIAH 48:18

*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.*

Peace of conscience and spirit are gifts God gives to those who are obedient (Isaiah 26:3; Psalm 37:37; Romans 8:6; 14:17–19; Philippians 4:7). That kind of peace comes from the Holy Spirit and is made available through the power of Christ and his atonement (John 14:27; 16:33). God’s peace is not offered for this world alone. The peace spoken of here continues into celestial glory and will be consistent, ever flowing, like a river (Isaiah 66:12).

When people obey the Lord’s commandments their righteousness is as unstoppable as the ocean waves. Also, their righteousness is truly subject to the pull of the heavens, as the waves are subject to the moon.

ISAIAH 49:10

*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.*

This passage refers to the Lord’s blessings for those who are returning from exile, as well as for those returning from spiritual bondage. In physical captivity, exiles suffer from hunger and thirst. The heat of the sun threatens them. Spiritual exiles thirst for gospel truth and peace. The Lord protects and nourishes them. In all circumstances, it is only through Christ that spiritual hunger can be satisfied (John 6:35; Alma 31:38; 32:42; 3 Nephi 12:6; 20:8). The expression “springs of water” symbolizes living water (Isaiah 35:6–7; 41:17–18; 43:19–20), or Jesus Christ.

ISAIAH 51:1–2
Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

Isaiah 51 is a call to those who “follow after righteousness.” The call is repeated again and again: “hearken,” “look,” “hearken,” “lift up your eyes,” and again “hearken” (vv. 1–7). The call reminds the righteous that they are descendants of Abraham and Sarah and heirs to the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. Their rock and quarry are Abraham and Sarah, from whom they descend. Even as Abraham and Sarah received promises when fulfillment seemed beyond hope, so will the Lord fulfill his promises to comfort Zion (v. 3).

Ultimately, of course, the rock from which the righteous come is God the Father, and Christ, who is called the Rock at least thirty-four times in the scriptures. For example, the Lord informed Enoch, “I am Messiah, the King of Zion, the Rock of Heaven, which is broad as eternity” (Moses 7:53).

**ISAIAH 54:17**

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

The Lord speaks to the righteous and promises them protection from any weapon that is formed against them. This promise was repeated to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon. The Lord said, “Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you—there is no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper” (D&C 71:9).

And Joseph Smith prayed on behalf of those who would worship in the temple, “We ask thee, Holy Father, to establish the people that shall worship, and honorably hold a name and standing in this thy house . . . that no weapon formed against them shall prosper” (D&C 109:24–25). Weapons, of course, take many forms, including instruments of physical harm and destruction or unseen powers of darkness.

**ISAIAH 58:5**

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

Chapter 58 of Isaiah outlines the true law of the fast. Fasting involves far more than simply abstaining from two meals. Participants in a true fast seek to help and bless others. They remove heavy burdens from the shoulders of others. They share their substance. If they do these things, they will be blessed spiritually and temporally. Their portion of light will increase. Their health will be strengthened and the Lord will be their guide in all things.

Verse 5 indicates that they are not to put on an appearance of one who is making a sacrifice. True fasting does not consist of outward signs such as hanging one’s head like a bent bulrush to give the appearance of suffering and to attract the attention of others.
**ISAIAH 58:6–7**

*Is not this the fast that I have chosen? . . . Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

This verse details four actions of a true fast before the Lord: (1) giving bread to the hungry, where bread represents food generally; (2) assisting the poor; (3) covering the naked, meaning providing the destitute with clothing through fast offerings; and (4) helping family members in need, or in Isaiah’s words, “[hiding] not thyself from thine own flesh.” These four actions are the essence of pure religion (Matthew 25:31–46; James 1:27). Those who have done these things will receive God’s blessings. Isaiah lists some of those blessings. For example, their fasting will be recognized and their prayers heard (Isaiah 58:8–12; see also Ezekiel 18:5–9, 16–17).

**ISAIAH 58:11**

*And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*

This verse describes four blessings to those who live the true law of the fast before the Lord: the Lord will guide them, he will satisfy their souls in drought, he will make fat their bones, and he will make them like a watered garden or spring of water. The Lord provides living water in times of spiritual drought. Bones were considered the gauge of the body’s vitality—they become dry and brittle with age and illness but are moist and supple with youth, health, and vigor (Job 21:24). Bones that are made fat are renewed and made strong (Isaiah 66:14). “Make fat thy bones” may also refer to the resurrection, when dead bones will be renewed with life.

Isaiah says the righteous will be like a “watered garden” and a “spring.” In a garden, water, the source of life, often comes from the outside. It is the same for the righteous, who receive sustenance from the Lord (Isaiah 51:3; Numbers 24:5–6). Jesus said, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). In this dispensation the Lord promised, “Unto him that keepeth my commandments I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life” (D&C 63:23).

**ISAIAH 65:8**

*Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants’ sakes, that I may not destroy them all.*

Israel is the Lord’s vineyard (Isaiah 5:1; 27:2), which has produced mostly wild grapes useless for wine. But there have always been a few who remain faithful to the Lord and his law. For the sake of these few good grapes, the Lord has refrained from altogether destroying the vineyard. In the end, though, only the good clusters will be saved, and the rest will be destroyed (Isaiah 1:9, 27–28; 4:3–4).
The expression “destroy it not; for a blessing is in it,” may have been part of a vintage song. (Isaiah 16:10 and Jeremiah 25:30 suggest that those who worked in vineyards sang and shouted.) The grape cluster should not be destroyed because of the good juice in it. This image symbolizes the Lord’s treatment of Israel—he promises not to destroy the whole of Israel because of the good people who remain.

**ISAIAH 65:10**

*And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.*

Isaiah 65:8–10 is a prophecy about God’s covenant people. He refers to them as “my servants”, “Jacob”, “Judah,” “an inheritor,” “mine elect,” and “my people.” The Lord promises to provide an inheritance for his elect (v. 9) and a safe place for the righteous.

Sharon is the coastal plain from Carmel south to Joppa. The Israelites marched through the valley of Achor (perhaps Wadi Qelt), on the east, to get from Jericho to Jerusalem (Joshua 7:24; 15:7). Isaiah expresses, then, that the whole land from east to west, will become a place of safety and refuge for the Lord’s people. It will become like a gigantic sheepfold for those who seek the Lord. They will find pasture, water, and safety there, because Jesus Christ himself will be their Shepherd.
The Earthly Ministry of Jesus Christ

Though Isaiah lived 750 years before Jesus Christ, he saw in vision many aspects of the mortal ministry of the Lord, including his birth, childhood, miracles, trials, and divine sacrifice. Many of the prophecies he recorded of Jesus Christ’s great work on earth have already been fulfilled and some are yet to be fulfilled.

ISAIAH 1:18

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

In this passage scarlet, a bright red, and crimson, a deep red, are both used to symbolize blood, which in turn can signify sin. The sins of the children of Israel were both conspicuous and deep-seated. The Lord, through Isaiah, contrasts the bloodlike reds of scarlet and crimson with pure white snow and wool.

White symbolizes purity, innocence, and light. In addition, wool, a product from a lamb, points to the atonement of Jesus, the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The contrast between red and white illustrates the power of Christ’s atonement to make the penitent sinner clean.

ISAIAH 8:14

And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.

To the righteous, Jesus Christ is the elect and precious chief cornerstone “upon which they might build and have safe foundation” (Jacob 4:15). But to those who reject his word, Jesus is “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence” (1 Peter 2:6–8; 1 Corinthians 1:23).

The phrase “both the houses of Israel” refers to the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. During times of apostasy, citizens of these kingdoms viewed Jesus Christ as a stumbling stone, or someone who got in their way during their journey through mortality.

ISAIAH 9:1–2

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

The land of the shadow of death is a land peopled by those who do not know Jesus Christ, the "great light," and his gospel. These people walk in darkness. Jesus was the great light that shone upon the inhabitants of Galilee during his mortal mission. Matthew 4:13–16 contains the fulfillment of this prophecy found in Isaiah 9:1–2. As those who
follow Christ walk through mortality in the latter days, they will receive great hope, comfort, and joy when they accept Jesus as the "great light."

**ISAIAH 9:3**

*Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest.*

Isaiah 9 presents a joyous messianic prophecy. The familiar words "for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (v. 6) are part of this prophecy and foretell the coming of the Savior. Because of Jesus Christ’s coming, joy will increase (v. 3). The Messiah will break the rod of the oppressor (v. 4). The soldiers’ boots, garments, and other items of war will be burned with fire (v. 5). A child who will establish his righteous government and peace among the nations will be born (vv. 6–7; Luke 2:10–11). The Prince of Peace will reign.

The Lord’s victory over Israel’s enemies and his coming will bring Israel a joy similar to that experienced by a farmer at an abundant harvest.

**ISAIAH 9:4**

*For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.*

In biblical times, the staff and rod were used by taskmasters on slaves. A yoke was a wooden frame designed to harness together beasts of burden. These three items—the yoke, staff, and rod—signify oppression, or the burdens placed on Israel by its neighbors (Isaiah 10:5, 24–27).

In particular, the language of this verse recalls the manner in which Egypt oppressed the Israelites before Moses led them out of captivity. (For example, see "yoke" in Leviticus 26:13; "burden" in Exodus 1:11; 2:11; 5:4–5; 6:6–7; and "taskmasters" in Exodus 3:7; 5:6, 10–14). Just as Moses delivered ancient Israel from the Egyptian yoke of physical bondage, Jesus Christ delivers his followers from the yoke of spiritual bondage.

**ISAIAH 11:1**

*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*

The discussion of the tree, its rod, stem, branch, and roots in Isaiah 11:1 is a continuation of the prophecy regarding the cutting down of the forest from the previous chapter. The Lord will "lop the bough," hew down the "high ones," and "cut down the thickets of the forest" (Isaiah 10:33–34). The Lord, or forester, will trim the boughs and cut down the trees to clean out the forest and prepare the way for the stem of Jesse to flourish. This trimming and cutting symbolizes the Lord’s severing the power and glory of unrighteous leaders and their nations.
The stem of Jesse is Christ. The Doctrine and Covenants is explicit: “Who is the Stem of Jesse spoken of in the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th verses of the 11th chapter of Isaiah? Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ” (D&C 113:1–2).

The Davidic royal family, then, is compared to the stump or “stem” of an olive tree. Just as an olive tree is able to send forth a shoot or “rod,” so would the family of David send forth a leader who would have wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, and knowledge (Isaiah 11:2). That leader is Jesus Christ.

ISAIAH 28:16

Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.

This is a prophecy about Jesus Christ, who is called a “stone,” a “tried stone,” and a “precious corner stone.” A tried stone withstands a test of strength, and a cornerstone adds permanence and strength to the foundation of a building. Here the building is Zion, where “he that believeth” may have a “sure foundation” on which to build (1 Peter 2:6–8). Paul’s imagery accords with that of Isaiah and Peter. Paul says that the church was built “upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20).

ISAIAH 28:24

Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? Doth he open and break the clods of his ground?

Isaiah presents the Parable of the Farmer in Isaiah 28:23–29. The Lord is the plowman who, like the farmer, performs all his work in its proper order, with specific results in mind. Through a rhetorical question in verse 24, Isaiah explains that a plowman does not plow continuously—literally all day, every day. If he did, the growing season would be over before the seeds were ever planted. The farmer must undertake many tasks to ensure a successful harvest. Similarly, the Lord follows a precise pattern as he deals with his people. Everything occurs in its proper order with specific results in mind.

ISAIAH 32:1–2

Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness . . . And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Jesus Christ is the “king” and the “man” mentioned in the passage above. Isaiah provides four metaphors to indicate the Lord’s temporal and spiritual preservation of the Saints: “hiding place” (or shelter), “covert,” “rivers of water,” and “shadow of a great rock.” These correspond with “wind,” “tempest,” “dry place,” and “weary land”—words that pertain to this earthly existence with all of its tribulation and hardships. When the Lord’s followers are thirsty, the Lord will provide rivers of water to quench their thirst, and when they require rest, he will provide shadow beside a great rock. In other words, when they need shelter from the tempests of life, Jesus will be their refuge.
ISAIAH 40:11

[The Lord God] 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.

This passage compares the Lord to a shepherd and his people to lambs. The same images have been used by many other prophets in describing humanity’s relationship with God (Psalms 23; 28:9; Jeremiah 23:3). Isaiah says that the Lord will do four things for his people: (1) he will feed them as a shepherd feeds his flock; (2) he will gather them with his arm; (3) he will carry them in his bosom, or the fold of the shepherd’s robe, a symbol of intimate, loving care; and (4) he will lead those that are with young. That is to say, he will provide his people with temporal as well as spiritual sustenance.

ISAIAH 42:3

A bruised reed shall [the Lord] not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.

Isaiah had a great understanding of the Savior and his mission to strengthen those who were faltering. He knew that Jesus’ mission would include serving the house of Israel and the gentiles. He knew that Christ would not fail his mission (Isaiah 42:1–9).

Isaiah introduces two images in Isaiah 42:3—a “bruised reed” and a “smoking flax.” A reed is a marsh plant with tall, hollow stems. A bruised reed is one that is bent and cracked, and therefore weak. A bruised reed may represent physical weaknesses or afflictions. A smoking flax is a wick made from linen for an oil lamp, whose flame wavers, about to go out. This may signify someone who is spiritually weak, whose faith falters.

Jesus healed and cared for the physically infirm, and he taught and guided the spiritually weak. A reed requires much water to grow properly. A linen wick burns brightly when it has sufficient oil. Symbolically, Jesus Christ, as the water of life, provides water to the reed and, as the Anointed One, provides oil to the wick.

ISAIAH 44:22

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

Isaiah 44:21–23 declares that the Lord has redeemed the house of Israel. In these verses the Lord reminds the children of Israel of their preferred status as his servants, adding that he will forgive them and forget their sins if they will return to him. The atonement has already been firmly decreed, and mankind’s sins can be blotted out by the Redeemer. Because of this great gift of redemption, all God’s creations sing praises to him (v. 23).

In verse 22, the Lord uses a universal image—a thick cloud—to illustrate how he is able to blot out sins. As a thick cloud blots out the sky, the Lord will blot out sins and remove them from his memory. A scripture revealed through Joseph Smith presents a similar message: “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).
ISAIAH 46:4

And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.

“Hoar hairs” are gray hairs. Here the Lord comforts his people by promising that he will support and help them from the beginning to the end of their lives (Psalm 71:16–18, 21). The imagery depicts the Lord as a kind and loving father. He made his children, carried them, delivered them, and even when they grow old and their hair has turned gray, he will continue to carry them. He says, “I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you” (Isaiah 46:4).

ISAIAH 49:16

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

The phrase “graven thee upon the palms of my hands” refers to the marks of the nails in Christ’s hands. These marks remained after his resurrection (Luke 24:38–40; 3 Nephi 11:13–14). The nail marks are a sign to Israel—and to the world—that Christ fulfilled his mission as Savior (Isaiah 22:23, 25; John 20:25; 3 Nephi 11:14–15; D&C 6:37; 45:48–53).

The words “thy walls are continually before me” likely refer to the walls of Jerusalem. These walls are ever present in the consciousness of those who dwell in the city. In the same way, an awareness of the people of Israel is ever present with the Lord.

ISAIAH 53:2

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.

Isaiah 53 is one of the most detailed prophecies of the Messiah found in the Old Testament. It gives Isaiah’s readers vast insight into the work of the mortal Jesus and the blessings he offers. Worshipers learn from this chapter that Jesus Christ would bear the transgressions and iniquities of all mankind. He would take the sins of his followers upon himself so that they could be cleansed. He would also bear their grief and sorrow, their emotional pain and suffering. If they would turn to him, he would heal them of all these infirmities.

Isaiah uses two plant metaphors to portray the young mortal Jesus: “tender plant” and “root.” Jesus was like a tender plant, untouched by corruption and sin. He was subject to temptation, hunger, fatigue, sickness, and pain. The Father, however, watched over the young Jesus as a careful gardener watches a tender plant. Luke records: “The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40).

Jesus came forth not in fertile land, but in “dry ground,” both temporally and spiritually. He grew up in the harsh conditions of an arid land and a spiritually barren nation. Dry ground is the opposite of streams of water, which
usually denote temporal happiness and prosperity. Streams of water also represent the spiritual life brought by
the gospel. The dry ground represents the spiritual barrenness of apostate Judaism.

ISAIAH 53:5

But he was wounded for our transgressions.

Isaiah 53 comprises a detailed prophecy of the ministry, atoning sacrifice, and triumph of Jesus Christ. Verse 5
speaks concerning Christ’s atoning sacrifice. The expression “he was wounded for our transgressions” may better
be translated from the Hebrew as “he was pierced for our transgressions.” Jesus Christ was pierced for the
transgressions of all mankind while on the cross. The Psalmist prophesied: “They pierced my hands and my feet”
(Psalm 22:16). In April 1829, Joseph Smith received this revelation from the Lord: “Behold the wounds which
pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet” (D&C 6:37).

ISAIAH 53:5

He was bruised for our iniquities.

The phrase “he was bruised for our iniquities” is more correctly rendered “he was crushed [Hebrew dakaʾ] for our
iniquities.” Jesus Christ was crushed in the Garden of Gethsemane. The word Gethsemane (Hebrew Gath Shemen)
itself signifies ‘oil press.’ Just as olives are crushed at an olive press to render pure olive oil, so the Anointed One
was crushed to sanctify mankind. He suffered so mightily in the Garden of Gethsemane that he bled from every

ISAIAH 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.

Isaiah 53 testifies again and again that Jesus Christ bore the sins of mankind. “He hath borne our griefs, and
carried our sorrows,” “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities,” “[he] hath laid on
him the iniquity of us all,” “for the transgressions of my people was he stricken,” “he shall bear their iniquities,” and
“he bare the sin of many” (vv. 4–12).

Though Jesus Christ has carried the burdens and sins of humanity, all have strayed from the Shepherd and
wandered from the strait and narrow path. Every soul who has ever lived—except for Jesus—has sinned (Romans
3:23; 1 Peter 2:25; 1 John 1:8, 10). Rather than walking the Lord’s path, they often go their own way. The sheep
that have strayed need a Shepherd to guide them.

ISAIAH 53:7
He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearsers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Isaiah uses two similes to describe Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice: “as a lamb” and “as a sheep.” Not only is Christ the Good Shepherd (John 10:14), but he is also the sacrificial lamb, who went without protest or resistance to his death. This contrasts mankind, the sheep that willfully went astray (Isaiah 53:6). The sacrifice of an unblemished lamb under the law of Moses prefigured the atoning sacrifice of Christ (Genesis 22:7–8; Exodus 12:3). The atonement fulfills the symbolism of the lamb.

The prophecy “he opened not his mouth” was fulfilled when Jesus appeared before Herod and Pilate. Herod “questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing” (Luke 23:9). Mark similarly records that when Jesus stood before Pilate, “the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing” (Mark 15:3–5).

ISAIAH 53:9

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.

Isaiah prophesies that Jesus Christ would make his “grave with the wicked.” This prophecy was fulfilled when Christ was crucified between two robbers (Matthew 27:38). It may also mean that his grave was with those who had sinned, though he himself was without sin.

The prophecy that Jesus would be buried “with the rich” was fulfilled when he was buried in the tomb of the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57–60).

ISAIAH 55:1

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

This short passage is an invitation to come to the living waters of Christ and drink freely. Those who are thirsty are offered living water, and wine and milk besides. This promise is echoed in the Gospel of John, in which the apostle records Jesus as saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37; Revelation 21:6; 22:17).

The living water is the love of God (1 Nephi 11:25). Ultimately, it represents Jesus Christ and his atonement, the only true source of eternal life. The blessings of the atonement have no temporal cost. Individuals pay no monetary price to receive the blessings of the atonement of Christ. Yet God does require a spiritual price: a broken heart and a contrite spirit (2 Nephi 2:7; 3 Nephi 9:20; D&C 59:8).

ISAIAH 64:8
But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

Isaiah 64:8 is part of Isaiah’s Intercessory Prayer, offered in powerful poetry (Isaiah 63:15–19; 64:1–12). In this prayer, the prophet pleads on behalf of his people, asking the Lord to look down from heaven in mercy (Isaiah 63:15). Isaiah directly addresses the Lord eight times—five times with the words, "O Lord," twice as “thou art our father,” and once with the expression “O God.”

The address, “thou art our father” (Isaiah 64:8), suggests a God who is also a Father, one who knows and loves his children. The people through Isaiah acknowledge their true relationship to their creator. As clay, they are nothing without the creator, having no shape and no power to mold themselves. They are in all things subject to the potter. It is a prayer not only from those of old but from the hearts of God’s covenant people in the latter days as well.
The Restoration and the Gathering

Large sections of Isaiah’s writings pertain to the restoration of the gospel, the gathering of Israel, and the building of Zion in the last days. Isaiah prophesied of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, missionary work, Israel’s gathering to the gospel, latter-day temples, the establishment of Zion and its stakes, and the blessings that would be enjoyed in Zion.

ISAIAH 2:2–3

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. . . . and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.

Isaiah speaks directly to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today. Many are blessed to see the fulfillment of this prophecy as they enter the Lord’s temples and are taught of “his ways” and walk in “his paths.” Isaiah’s prophecy of the “mountain of the Lord” is fulfilled as temples are built throughout the world (Isaiah 2:1–5).

The prophecy ultimately refers to the Salt Lake Temple, nestled in the hills and mountains, as well as to the future temple of Jerusalem, which will be established in the mountains of Judea (v. 1). People from all nations will gather to obey the God of all nations and to help build up his kingdom on earth. Joseph Smith taught that “there should be a place where all nations shall come up from time to time to receive their endowments” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 367, see also 27).

For a gathering of people to “flow,” as a river up a mountain, a power greater than gravity must be at work. This power is the power of God and of the temple. Joseph Smith summed up the connection between this latter-day gathering of Israel and temple service: “The object of gathering the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world . . . was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation” (History of the Church, 5:423).

ISAIAH 5:30

And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea.

Isaiah 5:26–30 introduces two divine activities that will attract members of the house of Israel to their lands of promise in the last days. One, God will hold up a flag, or standard, to all the nations of the earth around which Israel will rally. And two, God will attract the attention of Israel through a “hiss,” sometimes translated from Hebrew as “whistle.”

In the context of these two divine activities, verse 30 seems to suggest that the children of Zion shall roar like the roaring of the sea. They will be armed with the Spirit and its gifts. They will possess great priesthood powers that are mightier than the great roaring of the earth’s oceans.
ISAIAH 10:22

For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return.

Isaiah 10:20–27 pertains to scattered Israel’s return to its lands of promise and the renewal of its covenant status with God in the last days. The Old Testament formula for an apostate people’s return to God is found in 2 Chronicles 30:6–9. These verses speak of Israel’s return to the promised land, to God through repentance, and to true temple worship. The expression “as the sands of the sea” recalls the Abrahamic covenant that speaks of Abraham’s posterity becoming as numerous as the sands of the sea (Genesis 22:17; Abraham 3:14). Although the number of children of Israel will be exceedingly high, only a remnant will return.

ISAIAH 11:6

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.

This passage speaks of the millennium. Old enmities and hostilities will cease, signaling a change in the order of things. Six animals are listed. The wolf, leopard, and lion are wild beasts that typically feed on the lamb, kid, and calf, which are domestic animals. The wild animals, ferocious predators, are a threat to mankind. The tame animals are docile, submissive, nonthreatening, and useful to humanity.

Isaiah 11:6 may be taken literally. Harmony in nature will characterize the millennial period of earth’s history. The phrase “a little child shall lead them” suggests that small children will not only feel safe among ferocious beasts but will have control over them and lead them (Isaiah 11:6–9). “The enmity of beasts, yea, the enmity of all flesh, shall cease” (D&C 101:26).

The passage is also symbolic. The wolf, leopard, and lion represent those who foment war and murder. The lamb, kid, and calf symbolize meek and peaceful people. All will dwell together in peace during the millennium.

ISAIAH 18:3

All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.

Isaiah identifies two symbols—the ensign and the trumpet—that invite earth’s inhabitants in the latter days to gather to the Lord’s church and kingdom.

On three occasions the ram’s horn, often translated “trumpet,” is mentioned in the writings of Isaiah (Isaiah 18:3; 27:13; 58:1). The trumpet’s sound is clear, loud, and unmistakable. It beckons the world’s inhabitants to gather to the gospel (Isaiah 27:13; Matthew 24:31). Every missionary of this dispensation is instructed that “at all times, and
in all places, he shall open his mouth and declare my gospel as with the voice of a trump* (D&C 24:12) so that the earth's inhabitants may hear the gospel's message.

Isaiah also speaks concerning an ensign—or banner or flag—that would be erected upon a mountain (Isaiah 5:26; 11:10–12; 18:3; 30:17; 31:9; 49:22). In the latter days the ensign is a highly visible symbol that represents the gospel of Jesus Christ (see D&C 45:9; 105:39) and the light that accompanies it (D&C 115:4–5).

**ISAIAH 31:7**

*For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin.*

Isaiah 31:4–9 speaks mainly to people of the latter days. If those who are part of Zion will cast away their wickedness as one casts away false gods, then the Lord will defend Zion. He will be like a mighty lion, “roaring on his prey” (v. 4), or like a bird, flying protectively over its nestlings to preserve them (v. 5). He will use his mighty sword to protect Zion (v. 8). In verse 7, Isaiah prophesies once again that one day the people of Israel will cease their worship of false gods (see Isaiah 30:22 for a similar prophecy).

**ISAIAH 35:1–2**

*The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly.*

Isaiah compares the blossoming of the desert, or wilderness, to the righteous of latter-day Israel. This includes the Lamanites, who are like flowers in the desert that blossom abundantly. Elsewhere Isaiah writes, “Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit” (Isaiah 27:6; D&C 33:5).

Modern revelation adds light to the passage of Isaiah cited above: “But before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose. Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains” (D&C 49:24–25). The revelation places Jacob in the “wilderness,” a term also used in Isaiah 35, and readers learn that Jacob and Zion shall “flourish” and the Lamanites shall “blossom.” The words “flourish” and “blossom” suggest that Jacob, Zion, and the Lamanites are like plants or flowers that will thrive spiritually.

After the death of Jesus and his apostles, the church was driven “into the wilderness” (D&C 86:3), but the restoration of the gospel has caused “the coming forth of [the Lord’s] church out of the wilderness” (D&C 5:14). The house of Israel is becoming more spiritual.

**ISAIAH 35:6–7**
For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

These two verses continue the prophecy in Isaiah 35:1–2 that “the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly.” Before the restoration of the gospel, the house of Israel was like a “wilderness” and “parched earth.” But with the restoration and its great blessings, powers, and glories, those members of the house of Israel who have gathered to the church have blossomed because of the “waters” and “streams in the desert,” “pools” of water in parched ground, and “springs of water” in a land that is thirsty.

Through the power of Christ, desolate wastelands will become gardens in the last days. The waters point to Christ and his salvation. Earlier Isaiah wrote that the “Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams” (Isaiah 33:21).

Reeds and rushes require ample water and cannot grow in the harsh wilderness. These plants probably represent the righteous who partake of the waters of life.

**ISAIAH 40:9**

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Isaiah calls out to Zion and Jerusalem to prepare for the coming of their Lord. Before Zion’s messengers take the restored gospel, or “good tidings,” to the world, they are commanded to go up to the high mountain, or God’s temple. Isaiah’s words apply to Latter-day Saints. “Ye are sent forth . . . to teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit; and ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power” (D&C 43:15–16; 110:9).

The good news of the Lord’s gospel will go forth from Jerusalem to the cities of Judah, or to all of the lands where the children of Judah dwell, to call them to come and behold their God. In a broader sense, Zion and Jerusalem stand as a symbol for all the covenant people of God.

**ISAIAH 41:15**

Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

Isaiah 41:1–20 pertains to the Lord blessing Israel, his servant. Isaiah’s prophetic promises to Israel are wonderful. They have application to the Lord’s servants in the latter days.

Verse 15 says that God will mold the righteous of the last days into a powerful threshing instrument, enabling them to perform their work of gathering souls to Christ. In Isaiah’s time, a threshing instrument was dragged over grain by an ox or ass to separate the grain kernels from the husks. To help the house of Israel fulfill its mission,
which is often compared to harvesting, the Lord will make it into a new threshing instrument. Most threshing instruments work best on level ground, but this threshing tool, created by the Lord, has special capabilities. It threshes hills and mountains, a seemingly impossible task. That means that the house of Israel will be capable of performing remarkable works through the power of God. Though they are “the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised,” God has called upon them “to thrash the nations by the power of [his]” (D&C 35:13).

Part of the goal in harvesting the white fields is to seek out the honest in heart (D&C 4). Eventually the righteous will be separated from the wicked, just as wheat is separated from the tares (Isaiah 41:16). For other uses of the images of threshing, threshing instruments, or threshing floors in Isaiah, see 21:10; 27:12; 28:23–29; 41:15.

**ISAIAH 41:18**

*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.*

In Isaiah 41, Isaiah addresses a number of issues that concern members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord has said, “[they] are the children of Israel” (D&C 103:17). Isaiah says that, as part of Israel,

- they are God’s servants (Isaiah 41:8);
- they are his chosen people (v. 9);
- they are called by God from among the chief men of the earth (v. 9);
- they are to fear not, for God will strengthen, help, and uphold them (v. 10).

The Lord also promises that

- while holding their right hand, he will say, “Fear not; I will help thee” (v. 13);
- he will mold them into powerful, unique instruments, enabling them to perform their work (vv. 15–16);
- those who are against them will be ashamed and confounded and will perish (v. 11);
- those who war against them will be “as nothing, and as a thing of nought” (v. 12).

If the children of Israel are ever thirsty, physically or spiritually, their small, empty cups will never suffice. God desires to give them a great river full of water to fill their needs. He says, “I will open rivers . . . and fountains . . . and . . . springs of water” (v. 18). Such are the great promises to the house of Israel.
And [the Lord] hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me.

Joseph Smith referred to this prophecy in relation to himself: “I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, striking with accelerated force against religious bigotry, priestcraft, . . . corrupt men and women—all hell knocking off a corner here and a corner there. Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 304).

The Lord, through Isaiah, uses symbols to refer to his power in his follower’s lives. “Mouth like a sharp sword” refers to the power of the message brought by God’s servant. It is an expression common in revelation. Hebrews 4:12, for example, reads, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (see also Revelation 1:16; D&C 6:2).

The two phrases “shadow of his hand” and “in his quiver” refer to God’s divine protection. The shadow of God’s hand is a place of ultimate safety (Isaiah 51:16). Arrows stored in an archer’s quiver are protected from the elements and always at hand. Similarly, God’s people receive his divine protection from both physical and spiritual harm. Through God’s power, his people are like the “polished shaft” of an arrow.

**ISAIAH 49:18**

Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.

In Isaiah 49:13–21, the Lord comforts his returning children as they gather in the last days. In verse 18, the Lord, depicted as the bridegroom, speaks to latter-day Israel, or the church, depicted as the bride. (See Isaiah 61:10; D&C 109:73–74; Revelation 21:2 for other examples of bride and groom symbolism.) The Lord tells his bride to look around and see all of the children coming to her. Then, using symbolic language, he promises her that she will clothe herself with many children, just as a bride wears many ornaments and jewelry at her wedding.

In this verse, then, the bride’s ornaments represent those who become Zion. As additional souls are gathered unto Zion, they will add to the glory of those already there. As fine clothing or expensive jewelry are precious to a bride, so are the souls of those gathered to the church.

**ISAIAH 54:2**

Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.

One ecclesiastical division of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a stake. Tent stakes, or pegs, help hold up and enlarge a tent. Each stake must be strong to keep the tent stable. President Ezra Taft Benson wrote,
“To members, the term stake is a symbolic expression. Picture in your mind a great tent held up by cords extended to many stakes that are firmly secured in the ground. The prophets likened latter-day Zion to a great tent encompassing the earth. That tent was supported by cords fastened to stakes (3 Nephi 22:2; Isaiah 54:2). Those stakes, of course, are various geographical organizations spread out over the earth. Presently Israel is being gathered to the various stakes of Zion” (“Come unto Christ,” 101).

The five commands in Isaiah 54:2, “enlarge,” “stretch forth,” “spare not,” “lengthen,” and “strengthen,” teach church members what they should be doing to build Zion in these last days (see also Moroni 10:31; D&C 133:9). One way that Zion will enlarge its tent and strengthen its stakes is to practice the law of consecration (D&C 82:12–15).

_ISAIAS 55:12_

_for ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands._

As Israel is gathered to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to its lands of inheritance in the last days, it will come forth in joy and peace. The gathering in joy and peace greatly contrasts the exodus from Egypt, which was fraught with fear and turmoil (Exodus 5–14; Isaiah 52:12). Joy and peace are two of the most desired fruits of the Spirit (Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22). They are also the two primary messages of the gospel. “Whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be” (1 Nephi 13:37). Joy comes from having received a remission of sins (Mosiah 4:3).

Even nature will join in the rejoicing as the children of Israel gather—the mountains and hills will sing and the trees will clap their hands. Elsewhere Isaiah records the manner in which the natural world will rejoice when the Lord redeems Israel: “Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel” (Isaiah 44:23). Also, “Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted” (Isaiah 49:13; 1 Chronicles 16:33).

_ISAIAS 60:6–7_

_the multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee._

In the last days Zion will be established, shining like a light to the world. The glory of the Lord will be there, and many will seek to join themselves to it, bringing their wealth with them. (See Isaiah 60:1–22 for a full description of this time.) The gentiles will add much wealth and strength to Israel, symbolized by the terms “forces,” “multitude of camels,” “dromedaries of Midian and Ephah,” “gold,” “incense,” “flocks of Kedar,” “rams of Nebaioth,” “ships of Tarshish,” “silver,” and “glory of Lebanon” (vv. 5–13).

During the biblical period, wealth could be measured by the number of camels and flocks a family possessed. Similarly, the animals mentioned above symbolize much wealth that will be brought to Zion in the last days. Not
only will the gentiles gather to Zion, but they will also carry many riches with them. The many references to wealth may also refer to spiritual gifts and treasures.

**ISAIAH 66:20**

*And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations . . . to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.*

In preparation for the second coming and the millennium, the Lord will gather the righteous from all nations (Isaiah 66:18). Missionaries will go forth to declare his glory among the gentiles, even to far-off places that do not know the true God (v. 19). The missionaries will bring the gentile converts to the temple, or holy mountain, as an offering unto the Lord (v. 20). The offering may be the souls of converts, with the clean vessel being their pure bodies, or it may be the names of the dead they bring to the temple for vicarious ordinance work (D&C 128:24). The gentiles will be granted the privilege of holding the priesthood and of participating in temple worship (Isaiah 66:21).
The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

Many of Isaiah’s prophecies pertain to the last days, the second coming, and the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. These prophecies foretell that Jesus the Messiah will smite the earth and slay the wicked at his coming, preparing the way for the glorious millennium, when he will rule with justice and righteousness. Isaiah wrote using images from his time that still carry this powerful message to people today.

ISAIAH 2:4

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nations will not life up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

The passage refers to the millennium, when peace will prevail. Instruments of destruction will be transformed into instruments of production. The instruments Isaiah mentions, swords, spears, plowshares, and pruning hooks, all have blades. Swords and spears are instruments that represent war and destruction (2 Nephi 1:18; 3 Nephi 2:19; D&C 45:33). Plowshares and pruning hooks represent peace and prosperity. A plowshare is the cutting blade of a plow. A pruning hook is a tool with a hooked blade that is used for pruning plants.

During the millennium nations will not participate in war, for they will destroy their weapons, making them into useful implements. Isaiah says that the nations will not even “learn war” any more.

ISAIAH 2:10

Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty.

At the great and dreadful day of the Lord, or the second coming, wicked people will attempt to hide from the Lord and his glory. They may literally hide in rocks or caves or they may try to hide their wrongs from God. Their attempt to hide will be in vain because the Lord’s power and great glory illuminate everything.

Revelation 6:15 presents a scenario similar to that found in Isaiah 2:10: “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains” because they feared the Lord.

ISAIAH 2:12–13

For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan.
The phrase "day of the Lord" usually refers to the events connected with Jesus’ second coming (2 Nephi 12:12–13; 23:6, 9). The day of the Lord is mentioned five times in Isaiah 2 to emphasize the event’s importance. Throughout Isaiah, the phrases “day of the Lord,” “in that day,” “day of visitation,” “day of his fierce anger,” and “day of the Lord’s vengeance” are found more than fifty-five times. This underscores how frequently Isaiah’s writings emphasize the last days and the second coming.

Isaiah speaks of the Lord coming upon the cedars of Lebanon and oaks of Bashan in the last days. Bashan is a region east of the Jordan River and north of ancient Gilead. Lebanon is the nation immediately north of Israel known for its fine cedars. The scriptures consistently use trees to represent people (Psalm 1:3; 3 Nephi 14:17–18; D&C 135:6). In the context of Isaiah 2:11–21, oaks and cedars are like proud people, who, Isaiah informs his readers, are “high and lifted up.” The day of the Lord will come and destroy them.

ISAIAH 2:13, 15

Yea, and the day of the Lord shall come . . . upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall.

Towers and fences sometimes represent humanity’s attempts to create protection from enemies and danger (Judges 9:46–52; Hosea 8:14). They are a demonstration of self-reliance. By contrast, the righteous rely on God for protection because for them God is a “wall of re” (Zechariah 2:5) and a “high tower” that cannot be destroyed (2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 18:2; 144:2). At the second coming, the Lord will destroy all man-made defenses, including towers and fenced walls. The safety they offer is temporary and unsure, but the protection the Lord offers is eternal and sure.

ISAIAH 2:20

In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats.

When Jesus Christ comes in power, glory, and judgment upon the earth, the wicked will cast away their idols to the moles and bats. Seeing the Lord’s glory, the wicked will be ashamed of their slavish dependence on any kind of false deity, including money, lust, or power.

Moles and bats dwell in darkness in holes and caves. According to the law of Moses, bats were not fit for human consumption: “They shall not be eaten, they are an abomination” (Leviticus 11:13, 19). Throwing idols to moles and bats may symbolize destroying idols or hiding them in dark places where they will not be seen.

ISAIAH 10:17

And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day.
Isaiah 10:16–18 describes the destruction by fire of the forests and trees when Jesus comes. The trees represent people, specifically the people of ancient Assyria and the wicked of the last days. The Lord will put an end to their evil. The forest-fire imagery parallels the section of Isaiah in which God, as the forester, cuts down the forest of Assyria with his mighty ax (vv. 33–34).

Isaiah uses the parallel terms “thorns” and “briers” frequently (Isaiah 5:6; 7:23–25; 9:18; 27:4). He identifies the wicked as thorns and briers, meaning prickly, often dry plants that torment and afflict both man and beast. The wicked, at the coming of the Lord in power and glory, will be consumed as easily as the quick burning thorns and briers.

**ISAIAH 24:20**

*The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.*

Isaiah’s expression is poetic. He portrays the earth staggering about like a person whose sense of balance has been affected by strong drink. He also compares the movement of the earth to a man-made cottage.

The Lord says through Joseph Smith that the “earth groans under the weight of its iniquity” (D&C 123:7). Isaiah teaches that “the earth mourneth” (Isaiah 33:9). Moses records that when “Enoch heard the earth mourn, he wept, and cried unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, wilt thou not have compassion upon the earth?” (Moses 7:49).

In Isaiah 24:18–20, the prophet makes seven statements portraying the earth’s reaction to the transgressions of humanity that are “heavy upon it”: “the foundations of the earth do shake,” “the earth is utterly broken down,” “the earth is clean dissolved,” “the earth is moved exceedingly,” “the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard,” the earth “shall be removed like a cottage,” and the earth “shall fall, and not rise again.” These expressions refer to great earthquakes that will occur in the last days when God’s judgments come upon a wicked world (D&C 88:89). They may particularly refer to the last great earthquake that will occur at the time of the coming of the Lord (Revelation 16:18–20).

**ISAIAH 30:27–28**

*Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity.*

Isaiah 30:27–33 describes the destruction of the wicked that will take place at Jesus Christ’s second coming, when the Lord comes from the distant heavens to cleanse the earth. Isaiah uses a number of descriptive phrases to describe the Lord’s manner of punishing and destroying the wicked—”burning,” “devouring fire,” “flame of a devouring fire,” “scattering,” “tempest,” “hailstones,” and “brimstone.”

In verse 28, Isaiah speaks of the “sieve of vanity,” better translated as “the sieve of destruction.” In the last days the Lord will sift the nations, removing the tares from the wheat with this sieve. In other words, he will separate the
wicked from the righteous. In Amos 9:9, God uses the same “sieve” to “sift the house of Israel . . . , yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.”

Isaiah assures those who dwell in Zion, the pure in heart who become one with their fellows, that they will be protected. He promises that they will sing songs to the Lord, worship at his temple, and experience a gladness of heart.

ISAIAH 33:12

And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

Isaiah presents two images that deal with burning: “burnings of lime” and “burned in the fire.” The first expression may refer to extracting lime from bones, a process requiring intense heat. (See Amos 2:1 for an example of burning bones.) Thus it would symbolize the complete destruction of the wicked at the Lord’s coming. The second image pertains to thorns and weeds that are burned to prevent them from overcoming useful plants. When thorns are cut down and placed in a pile, they fuel a fire that becomes fierce and hot. Such will be the burning of the wicked at Christ’s second coming.

ISAIAH 34:6

The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.

The language of Isaiah 34:1–8 uses symbolism from the Mosaic law of sacrifice. These verses suggest that the wicked will have to die for their own sins because they do not partake of the blessings of the sacrifice of Christ. The wicked will be slaughtered like the sacrificial animals in the temple (Jeremiah 46:10; Revelation 19:17–18). Bozrah (perhaps modern Busra) was the capital of Edom, here called Idumea. Idumea represents the wicked world (D&C 1:36) and will be destroyed by the Lord (Ezekiel 25:14).

Lambs, goats, and rams were sacrificial animals used for sin and trespass offerings to symbolically cleanse the repentant offerer from both willful and inadvertent sins. Under the Mosaic law of sacrifice, the blood and fat of a sacrificed animal are reserved for the Lord (Leviticus 3:15–17). By using the three words “blood,” “fatness,” and “kidneys” in the context of the slaughter of the wicked, Isaiah emphasizes the Lord’s right to exact the penalty for iniquity. Blood and kidneys, with other internal organs, regulate the life of humans and beasts. The Lord’s slaughter will be complete, claiming the very life force of the wicked.

ISAIAH 60:20

Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light.
Isaiah uses two heavenly spheres—the sun and the moon—to explain an eternal truth, that Jesus Christ is the everlasting light. In the millennial New Jerusalem, the Lord’s light will be so consistent it will be as though both sun and moon are ever present. The Revelator describes a time similar to the one foretold by Isaiah, “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Revelation 21:23). “And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light” (Revelation 22:5).

**ISAIAH 63:1–3**

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

The opening verses of Isaiah 63 give two important questions and answers about the second coming of Christ. The first question is, Who comes with dyed garments traveling in the greatness of his strength? The answer: the Righteous One, who is mighty to save. The second question is, Why are your garments red, as one who has been treading in the winefat? The answer: because I have trodden the winepress alone, and I will trample the wicked and stain my garments with their blood.

When Christ returns, his garments will be red, as John saw: “And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood” (Revelation 19:13; D&C 133:48). The red clothing symbolizes at least two things: the blood Christ shed in accomplishing the atonement (Luke 22:44; D&C 19:18) and the blood of the unrepentant wicked he has slain in his wrath (Isaiah 63:3; Lamentations 1:15; D&C 133:48, 50–51). The blood symbolism is implied in the phrases “dyed garments,” “garments like him . . . in the winefat,” “winepress,” “blood . . . upon my garments,” and “stain all my raiment.”

When Christ offered the atonement in the Garden of Gethsemane, his agony was so great that “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood” (Luke 22:44). This blood presumably stained his garments. In addition, the blood of the sins of all mankind—the signs of wickedness—will stain his garments. This blood of atonement is symbolized by the image of a man who treads red grapes in a winepress, staining his clothing with the juice. But, with Christ, not only his hem but his whole garment will be stained. His whole being was engaged in the work of atonement. He trod the winepress alone because only he could and did perform the atonement, kneeling in the Garden of Gethsemane and hanging on the cross. “I . . . have trodden the winepress alone, even the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God” (D&C 76:107; 88:106).
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