

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.

ISAIAH 49:2

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).

ISAIAH 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).

ISAIAH 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).