

Old Testament 36
The Glory of Zion Will Be a Defense
(Isaiah 1-6)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here are helps on understanding Isaiah.)

I. **Isaiah purposely made his writings difficult to understand.** He tells us why.

A. When called as a prophet (6:1-8), he was told his mission was to “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes” (v. 9-10). [Now you know why your ears become heavy reading Isaiah, and eyes start falling shut!]

B. *Why* was Isaiah asked to do this? “lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” (v.10).

C. Why on earth would the Lord not want people to understand and be healed?

1. Paul answers this question. “For I would not brethren, [Gentile members] that ye should be ignorant of this mystery,... **that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the gentiles be come in**” (Romans 11: 25). Paul explains in Romans Ch. 10 and 11 that the Lord knew most of the original Israel would reject Christ, [due partly to their not fully understanding the scriptures] and be cut off. This was even planned, so that the gospel would go to the Gentiles, *giving them opportunity for salvation*. In subsequent verses, Paul explains that Israel would be brought back to the Gospel in the last days (11:26-36).

II. Isaiah’s manner of teaching **was a pattern and prophecy** of the Savior’s. The Savior gave most of His teachings in parables for the same reason, so that only a select few could understand. He said, after the parable of the sower, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” He then explained to His disciples, “**Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without [that is, not his disciples], all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand: lest at any time they should be converted,**” (Mark 4: 9-12).

A. John confirms the connection between Isaiah and Jesus. “though [Jesus] had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not...: That the saying of Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet might be fulfilled,...He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him” (John 12:37-41 referring to Isaiah 6:9-10).”

B. So to fully understand Isaiah and the Savior, we must really want to know, and want to believe and search diligently and prayerfully for the truth.

III. **It was meant for Christ to be rejected and crucified, that salvation might come to all,** but in a certain order: first to a few select of Israel, then to the Gentiles, and eventually back to a re-gathered Israel in the Last Days. Paul explains that some of the Lord’s reason for doing so was to humble Israel, and then the Gentiles, so that neither could be conceited or boast about their salvation (See Romans 11:16-21).

A. **We must remember All who ever lived upon the earth will eventually have full opportunity for salvation through the Lord’s great works of salvation for the dead.**

B. It is wonderful that through fulfilled historical events, the Book of Mormon, and modern day prophets, we *can now understand!* There are *twelve major events* of which Isaiah and the other ancient prophets continually prophesied

1. Israel and then Judah, due to wickedness, would soon lose their homelands.
2. In prophecy, a remnant of Judah would return from Babylonian captivity.
3. Jesus Christ would come to atone for sins, be crucified and resurrected.
4. Due to rejection of Christ, those in Judah would again lose their homeland.
5. Christ's spiritual blessings would go to the Gentiles.
6. However in time, apostasy would overtake the Gentile church.
7. In the last days, Christ's true church would be restored. It would consist mostly of descendants of Israel gathered out from the Gentile nations. [That's why we are sometimes called "Israel" and sometimes *referred to as part of the "Gentiles"*].
8. Jews would be brought back to their homeland.
9. Due to wickedness, great destruction will come upon the world in the Last Days.
10. Christ will return in power, identifying Himself openly as Messiah.
11. Judah and all people will recognize Jesus as Messiah. All knees will bow to Him.
12. The Millennium will come to pass.

IV. When Isaiah and other prophets foresaw these future events, they wrote of them as if they were moving a telescope back and forth, focusing first on one, then shifting quickly to another. [*Sometimes the shifts occur even within the same verse!*] And seldom did they focus on them in the order they would actually occur.

A. Some of these events were patterns of each other. *Prophets sometimes speak of one event but mix in prophecies of another event which fit the same pattern.* For example, warnings to wicked Gentile nations in Isaiah's time were blended with warnings to the Gentiles who would inherit the Gospel, but then pollute it through apostasy. (i.e., *Babylon, who captured Judah, becomes a symbol for the future Gentile powers who inherit Israel's spiritual blessings after Christ, but corrupt them*).

B. *To understand Isaiah and other prophets, put these 12 future events in mind (or on paper), and ask as you are reading, of which event they are speaking? They will almost always be speaking of one of them, or a combination of some in the same pattern.*

V. Applying the above principles to Isaiah 1-6

Listed below is the primary focus of these chapters, though prophecies often blend one period with another. For example, it is wise to remember that the rejection of Christ was Israel's greatest sin! So any warning to Israel of their wickedness might have reference to that time too. And, it is wise to read any chastisement of the wicked of the past as pertaining to Last Days wickedness as well.

Ch. 1:1-25 focuses on the wickedness of ancient Judah which brings about the loss of their land. *These warnings include those who later reject Christ and lose it again.*

Ch. 1:26-27 suddenly shifts to the last days when the Gospel will be restored to Israel.

Ch. 1:28-31 then shifts to last days destruction when all wicked will perish.

Ch. 2:1-3 speaks again of the Restoration.

Ch. 2:4-5 shifts to the time of the Millennium.

Ch. 2:6-9 shifts back to the times of wickedness when Israel lost their blessings.
 Ch. 2:10-22 blends that with the last days and destruction of all the wicked.
 Ch. 3:1-26 again speaks of ancient times when Israel was punished for their wickedness, but overlays significant parallel warnings for the wicked in our days.
 Ch 4:1-6 shifts to the time of the Millennium and time earth is cleansed.
 Ch 5:1-15 shifts back to time when Israel lost blessings due to wickedness, in particular **when they rejected Christ at His first coming, for this was Israel's greatest sin. Thus He removed His hedge that had previously protected them.**
 Ch. 5:16-19 The Lord, once rejected is now exalted, while those who reject Him will be or are in waste places, guilty of waiting for another instead of true Messiah.
 Ch. 5:20-25 focuses on results of rejecting Christ in His time, but blends warnings regarding Last Days when Christ's word will again be generally rejected.
 Ch 5:26-30 focuses mostly on His marvelous Last Days Works of gathering.
 Ch 6:1-13 Isaiah's mission is a pattern of Christ's. Also, after Christ is rejected, there would be desolation of their Promised Land (v. 11-12). But then a remnant would return in the last days (v. 13): Judah to the land and Israel to the Gospel. For Israel is the true seed and true root from which new life and new blessings would spring!

Isaiah did indeed make his word difficult to understand. But our hindsight gives us an advantage. **Only the Second Coming and the Millennium remain to be fulfilled.** *We can now understand Isaiah if we are willing to work at it.*

- VI. While waiting for those final events, we can "Make the Glory of Zion a Defense."
- A. We can do so by "standing in Holy Places," like the temple. Others have done so.
 - B. One of the darkest times in Church History was after Joseph Smith had been killed and mobs were pressuring the Saints to leave Illinois. A report came back from Samuel Brannan, who was then in Washington D.C., that some of the U.S. Cabinet felt it was not right to let an armed force [the Mormons] go into a foreign land [i.e., the Western part of the U.S. which was then Mexico]. William Clayton summarized their apparent view as "the Mormons must not be suffered to remain in the States and neither will it do to let us go to California and there is no other way but to exterminate [us]... from the face of the earth." [William Clayton, *Nauvoo Journal*, December 11, 1845; *History of the Church*, 7:544].
 Under this darkest of times, Brigham Young and a select few met in that part of the Temple which was completed. While they were not positive the message was true, still after Missouri, they knew it *could* be true. And using portions of the Temple ordinances, they pleaded with the Lord for guidance and their protection.
 After these prayers in the temple, Brigham Young then prophesied that the Saints would leave Nauvoo in spite of this new threat, and all those in attendance "agreed that God will deliver us..." So assuring was the Spirit that comforted them in that Holy place, Clayton would simply record later that night that he and his wife "went home thankful for the blessings and the privileges of the day" (*ibid*).

The Saints had already found peace and assurance in That Glorious Holy Place the Lord had prepared. And so can We!