

Old Testament 37
Thou Hast Done Wonderful Things
(Isaiah 18, 22, 24-26, 28-30, 40)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(This material can help change reading Isaiah from dread to excitement. It reveals more of the “Wonderful Things” the Lord has done).

I. In spite of its difficulty, the Lord *commands us* to read and to understand Isaiah.

A. “And now behold I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things [Isaiah’s writings]. Yea, a **commandment I give unto you that ye search these things** diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 23:1; emphasis added).

B. My first attempts to read Isaiah, (and other Biblical prophets), was like trying to cross a deep, murky pond, using stepping stones. Most of the material that passed beneath my eyes *was* dark and murky, but fortunately, there were just enough clear, recognizable “step-stones” or verses that I could understand, which kept me going.

However, because I determined that I really wanted to understand more of these prophetic writings, and have worked at it, including seeking help from others, **I have not only found that most of the murkiness has been replaced with greater and greater clarity, but I find Isaiah exciting!** This has happened as I came to understand the Lord’s full plan of works among all his people and “the manner of prophesying among the Jews.”

II. Like the Nephites, we are under special commandment to read Isaiah because *our experiences make it more understandable*.

A. Because the Nephites, as a “branch” of Israel, had been broken off, and Jesus had come to them openly and in power (not in obscurity as He had come to the Jews), the Nephites were able to understand Isaiah’s prophecies of scattered Israel and of Christ, with desire and work.

B. In fact, the Savior gave the Nephites keys to the major messages of Isaiah.

1. “For surely [Isaiah] spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel” (3 Ne. 23:2).

2. The Lord promised that the covering vail cast over the scriptures will be removed, after they have come to pass! (Isaiah 25:7).

C. Today, even more of Isaiah’s prophecies have been fulfilled: the Gospel has been restored and Israel is being re-gathered.

D. **For example, we can now understand Chapter 18, and find it exciting!**

The word “Woe” should be “Hail,” and according to Joseph Fielding Smith, the hailing is to the two American continents which are as a giant bird with two wings spread out (v.1). Primarily from these two continents, The Church is sending missionaries [“ambassadors and swift messengers”] throughout all the earth to seek scattered Israel [“A nation scattered and peeled,” i. e., shorn of its past blessings] (v. 2). We have lifted up our ensign as a signal to them in doing this work (v. 3). The completely wicked who do not repent will be swept off at the Second Coming (vs. 5-6). Eventually the Church will bring to the Lord “a present” of re-gathered Israel, who was once scattered and stripped [peeled] of their previous blessings (v. 7).

E. Due to the Book of Mormon, we can now understand Chapter 29, and **it is exciting!**

Warnings of two destructions of Jerusalem are combined in prophecy because they fit the same pattern: by Babylon shortly after 600 B.C., [from which Lehi and his family escaped], and by the Romans around 70 A.D. (v. 1-3). But a promise is made that the voice of the Israelite people will be heard again, “out of the dust” (v. 4). Eventually all the wicked will fall in the Last Days (v. 5-7). The Gentile churches, who inherited the Gospel after Christ, fell into apostasy due to the “prophets and seers [being] covered” (v. 10).

The Bible itself had become like a sealed book which even scholars could not understand; but they would now be understood by one unlearned [Joseph Smith] (vs. 11-12). [This is a dual prophecy, also fulfilled when Martin Harris took translations of the Book of Mormon to a world scholar]. Because too many leaders of apostate churches “draw near to me with their lips... and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men” (v. 13), the Lord would “do a marvelous work and a wonder” and eventually, due to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon which teaches doctrines in clarity, “the deaf [shall] hear the words of the book, [Bible and Book of Mormon] and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and ... darkness” (v. 18). “They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn [correct] doctrine” (v. 24).

III. *The Book of Mormon* helps us understand the Bible by teaching its doctrines with clarity. It also helps us to understand the things which are not yet fulfilled.

A. **Isaiah testified of Christ’s second coming (Ch. 30:18-33; Ch. 40). The Book of Mormon helps us understand those prophecies, as Christ’s appearance to the Nephites was a pattern of what will occur in that day.**

IV. Here are additional factors which have helped me understand Isaiah.

A. One of the most difficult aspects of Isaiah was the warnings to other countries. The names are obscure, and the tirades at first seemed unfair and cruel

B. Those warnings are derived from the fact Israel’s spiritual blessings went to the Gentiles, (after most of Israel had rejected Christ). In time the Gentile churches would become corrupt. **These warnings are mostly meant for them.** The Lord would bring back His gospel to the House of Israel. Influence of false churches would fail.

C. Here are authoritative statements which support these truths.

1. “...many chapters dealing with latter-day apostasy and the second coming of Christ are written relative to ancient nations whose destruction was but a symbol, a type, and a shadow of that which would fall upon all nations when the great and dreadful day of the Lord finally came” (Bruce R. McConkie, “Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah,” *The Ensign*, October 1973, pp. 82-3). Elder McConkie develops this idea in more detail in “Babylon: A Similitude of the Christian Era,” and “The Fall of Babylon,” in *The Millennial Messiah*, Deseret Book, 1982, pp. 421-447).

2. When we become sensitive to the spiritual meaning of the events in Isaiah’s time, we should realize there has been a missing link all along. Reinserting that missing link makes the flow of prophetic events more consistent.

3. Here are scriptural evidences in this regard:

a. Isaiah’s statements to the conquering nations of his time, particularly Assyria and Babylon, have actually more applicability to the Gentile nations who conquer Israel after Christ’s time, but whose real conquering was in taking over Israel’s

spiritual treasure: the Gospel and His Church. **For the significant victory is the obtaining of Israel's treasures. But the great treasures of Israel were its covenants with God and the temple treasures which signified those covenants!**

b. Thus to the nations victorious in obtaining Israel's treasures, the Lord says, "For [ye] said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom;... I have... robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people..." (Is. 10:13, 14). (Compare this to Paul's warning to the Gentile church in Romans 11, not to boast because they have received Israel's covenants, lest they too are cut off. And then he warns that in fact Israel will be returned to her covenants in time.)

c. **Another supporting evidence of this view is when Isaiah prophesies of the Gentiles' inheritance of Israel's treasures and King Hezekiah accepts it as good news.** "Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah [after Hezekiah showed the ruler of Babylon the treasures of the temple], "Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon.... Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken" (Is 39:5-6, 8).

Hezekiah is not a traitor. Both he and Isaiah understood the overall good in the plan of the Lord. **Israel would lose its spiritual covenants to the Gentiles so the world as a whole could be blessed, and Israel would be humbled.** But in the last days, Israel would again be brought back to its inheritance. Indeed this is what is specifically prophesied in several succeeding chapters *directly after* this incident and its prophecy of Israel's loss.

V. Also, when examined structurally, the pattern of much of Isaiah's writings usually places the prophecies of doom which will come in the latter-days against the conquering Gentile powers *between prophecies of Israel's fall and its latter-day re-gathering.*

A. If the downfall of Israel in Isaiah's time is prophetic of the final dispersal after Christ's death, the victories by the conquering nations is prophetic of the inheritance by the Gentile nation at that time, initially by Rome (As is shown more clearly in the prophecies of Daniel). Rome would inherit Israel's treasures, both physically and spiritually, and would spread the spiritual treasure throughout the known civilized earth. But it would in turn become lifted up in pride, corrupt its possession, and would be cut off spiritually (though its power would continue in a corrupted form until the last days).

Since Babylon was the image used to represent the Gentile power in Isaiah's time, it was also used by John to represent the apostate power in his "Revelation." "Babylon the great is fallen" (Isaiah Ch. 13; "Revelation" Ch. 18:2). But the scriptural imagery is extended to include all false teachings ("babble") and all who worship any false power (idol) other than the true God with true understanding.

Surely we can see that as we understand more and more of Isaiah's writings, we must truly proclaim of Israel's God, **"Thou hast done marvelous things!"**