

Ir-ot-38
Beside Me There Is No Savior
(Isaiah 40-49)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here are further guides in helping to understand Isaiah)

I. As said, my first readings of Isaiah were like using stepping stones to walk over a murky pond or stream. **The stepping stones which kept me going were almost always prophecies of the Savior or of the Restoration which somehow had previously been identified to me.**

A. But it remained puzzling to me how such prophecies fit into the surrounding material. For they often appeared suddenly and seemingly with little connection to the rest of the text.

B. Those who have accepted the previous explanations of how the Old Testament is full of similitudes of the Savior, will now be additionally rewarded. For it is only through an understanding of “types” or “similitudes” that the above puzzle is solved, and we can understand the writings, not only of Isaiah, but of all the prophets.

C. For example, Victor Ludlow has explained one appearance of a Messianic prophecy in Isaiah which had been dealing with a threatened conquest by Assyria. This is the famous, “For unto us a child is born... Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:6, 7). Dr. Ludlow, who agrees with other scholars that there is an initial reference to the birth of the righteous reformer, Hezekiah, here, states, “Understanding the use of types as a technique of prophesying helps explain how Isaiah was able to use pious examples from his age as models for his messianic prophecies.... Isaiah was merely using Hezekiah as a type, a figure of the future Messiah... When the Israelites heard of Isaiah’s prophecy, they knew it applied to Hezekiah and that they would enjoy a period of peace, but some of them also knew that its full realization would come only in the birth and life of the Messiah, the perfect king.” (Victor Ludlow, *Isaiah, Prophet, Seer and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982, p 155.)

II. Isaiah was not alone in prophesying in this manner. *All* the prophets prophesied in this manner. Paul tried to explain this, though his explanation is also not very clear. (And perhaps it is because he is not translated correctly.)

A. Paul referred to the time Moses gave the Mosaic Law. Before doing so, Moses covered his face with a veil (Exodus 34:33-35). Paul explained this strange act in this way. “Seeing then that we have such hope [through the knowledge of Christ] *we use great plainness of speech*: And not as Moses, which put a veil [sic] over his face, that the children of Israel could not [understand the true meaning of the Mosaic Law]. [For] their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament: which veil is done away in Christ” (2 Corinthians 3:12-4). (Emphasis added).

B. Paul is saying that when Moses is described as veiling his face, it was a witness that what he was giving Israel had a veiled meaning. That is, that the **Law carried veiled or hidden truths**, and men could only see through the veil by recognizing how those truths testified of Jesus the Christ.

C. Furthermore, Paul lets us know the same is true with all of the Old Testament, for he further says, “until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament: which veil is done away in Christ.”

D. In short, if we search for and come to understand its witnesses of Christ, we can penetrate the veil placed over the Old Testament. And this is true with the writings of Isaiah as well as all the other Old Testament prophets.

III. The Major Theme of Isaiah 40-49

- A. There are several themes pertaining to the Savior in these scriptures. But there is a major theme which ties them all together. This is laid out in Chapter 41:21-24.
1. In these verses God challenges Israel to have the false gods they worship foretell what will come to pass in the future, and then fulfill it. Of course they cannot. And so He says of those false gods, “Behold, *ye are* of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination *is he that* chooseth you” (v. 24).
- B. So a major theme is that the Lord has foretold everything that will come to pass, especially Christ’s first and second coming, and He already has or will still fulfill it!
- C. In Chapters 39-49, the Lord tells how He will bring Israel back to being a fruitful people in the last days. Here are some key scriptures and an overview of each chapter to help us understand these prophecies more clearly (i.e., more stepping stones!)
- Isaiah 39:8. Hezekiah says that Babylon’s receiving Israel’s treasures is a good thing, and “...there shall be peace and truth in my days.” Here he is actually speaking of the Last Days, (of which His kingship is a witness). For then Israel’s treasures will be restored.
 - Isaiah 40: Then Isaiah speaks of God comforting His people, and it does have reference to the atonement of Christ. But the most important fulfillment will be when He gathers them in the last days, and when He comes a second time to fully bless them.
 - *Isaiah 41: His call to the islands (and the people on them) includes all the scattered continents which have become as islands* and is a call to scattered Israel in all the earth to return to covenant with Him.
 - Isaiah 41: 15: The Lord here says He will make this regathered *Israel itself* into a “new sharp threshing instrument” which will harvest and gather out all who will come. Eventually, the Lord Himself will come, and the false high places established by men and those worshiping there will become as chaff.
 - Isaiah 42: Again, He is telling us of our work, which we must do, to help the blind to see, etc. For scattered Israel is (in v. 22) “...a people robbed [of their spiritual treasures] and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are in prison houses (those who died before hearing the gospel are in spirit prison),” etc.

- Isaiah 43:1-9. Again He stresses our being gathered in the last days,
- Is. 43:10-18. After being gathered, we become His witnesses of what He has done.
- Is 43:19-21. He has done a new thing concerning latter-day Israel and has blessed us in many ways with a new watering.
- Is 43:22-24. These verses remind that Israel in the past was not faithful, yet He forgave.
- Is 43:25–28. He has blotted out Israel’s past sins through His atonement.
- Isaiah 44. He, the Creator, reminds us of all His great works in relation to Israel. He will bless Israel greatly in the last days, via the Restoration of the Gospel.
- Isaiah 45: **Using Cyrus, who delivered Israel from Babylon in ancient times as a similitude, the Lord shows how Joseph Smith, like Cyrus, will bring about the freeing of Latter-day Israel from Latter-day Babylon.** While there is also reference to how the Jews would be brought back to their ancient land in the last days, there is double meaning. [How clever is the Lord]. For this masks the truth to the spiritually blind that a Latter-day Cyrus, Joseph Smith, would bring back receptive Israel to their spiritual inheritance.
- Isaiah 46: The Lord again asks us to compare His work to that of the idols men worship. There is no comparison! He has declared the end from the beginning (v. 10-13). He has already brought to pass most of what He had said He would do. Of what remains in the future He promises, “I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it [!] (v. 11).”
- Isaiah 47:1-15: As we later read in John’s “Revelation,” Babylon is a figure for all the false teachings of the last days. And all false teachings will eventually perish.
- Isaiah 48:1-22. The Lord reminds Latter-day Israel, who are being re-gathered, that He has declared their re-gathering from the beginning, and He has done it suddenly. His prophecies are coming to pass. He continues to call His people to come out of Babylon.
- Isaiah 49: He shows it is important to heed His call, so that we can accomplish His great work. “That thou may say to the [spirit] prisoners, Go forth [through our Temple work]; to them that sit in darkness, Shew yourselves” [through our missionary work, calling for those of Israel to reclaim their identity as being --- or desiring to be--- of Israelite blood] (v. 9). And He should surely pierce our hearts by reminding us “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;” (v. 16).

We should not only find great hope but also recognize our great responsibilities from these chapters. Isaiah has personally sent us messages for both!