

Ir-ot-39
How Beautiful Upon the Mountains
(Isaiah 50-53)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(The main purpose of this lesson is not only to understand, but to experience the beauty and power of Isaiah's writings, particularly of Isaiah Ch. 53).

I. Who does Isaiah most often speak about in his writings?

A. **He speaks mostly of us!**

B. Dr. Victor Ludlow points out that of 66 chapters in Isaiah, some 53 of them, if not dealing exclusively with the latter-days, contain verses pointing to our time. "It would seem that the prophet spent more time envisioning our day than he did teaching in his own!" (Ludlow in *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer and Poet*, p, 55).

C. We then should recognize how important our days are in the whole scheme of the Lord's works of salvation. And **we should recognize what a great debt of responsibility rests upon our shoulders.**

D. Consider his words, "How Beautiful upon the Mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings" (Isaiah 52:7).

1. Of whom is Isaiah speaking?

2. **He is first speaking of Jesus the Christ. But in addition to the Savior, these words apply to all of us as missionaries, who bear the message of His Restored Gospel.**

When I prepared to serve my first mission, to Ireland, and went to the MTC, Isaiah's prophecy of "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings" rang idealistically in my ears. Here I was in the very tops of those mountains. And here my feet were among those multitudes preparing to go throughout the world and "publish peace." I was excited to be participating in the fulfillment of this great prophecy. And yet as I looked upon each of these young persons and talked with them, "And where are you going?" I felt a little disappointment. They did not seem "beautiful" at all. Some were a bit too gangly; some a bit too short; some too skinny; some too heavy; some pimply; some too timid; some seemed uneducated. This great missionary force just seemed altogether too young and inadequate to fit this prophecy which had long inspired me. Perhaps I was seeing in them my own inadequacies. For while I burned with a testimony of the gospel, I was conscious of my own extra weight which had come with age, which I had hoped to leave behind, but most of which still hung defiantly there. Would others be able to feel *my* testimony in spite of my outward form?

Shortly after I arrived in Ireland, Zone Conference was held. My companion had warned me that as a new missionary I would have to bear my testimony, but in the process of preparing and helping serve lunch, I had totally forgotten about it --- *until I was suddenly called to bear my testimony.*

What was I going to say, I thought with some panic?

Undoubtedly because of my experience in the MTC, the first thing that came to my mind was Isaiah's prophecy. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings." So I said that. While my mouth began to speak those words, I felt

the Spirit surge up and carry them forth in an amazingly strong power. In fact, I was personally stunned with what the spirit infused into them.

Not only was the Spirit bearing witness, but I felt it was teaching me. It's lesson for me was while I was not yet seeing beauty in this missionary force, **the Lord was! The real beauty was in the message that was being carried, and their willingness to carry it.**

I have quoted these words more than once since then. I have never been able to say them with the same spirit with which they came forth that day. But I learned from the Spirit then, that the feet of His servants truly are beautiful in His eyes!

II. The beauty of the message we take is capsulized in Isaiah's marvelous prophecies, particularly in these chapters, which most often focus on Christ. Here Isaiah's visions are interspersed with scriptures relating to the re-gathering of a spiritually-led Israel in the last days. **The way Isaiah mixes the Lord's themes together may be confusing, unless we understand that Isaiah is telling us it is only Christ's former atoning work that has made it possible for us to be redeemed again as a people in the last days.**

A. Below are some evidences of these consistent, but intermixed messages.

- In Ch. 50 Christ reminds Israel He has not divorced them. They had cut themselves off through wickedness. But though once cut off, they were not cut off forever. His Hand, the Hand of the great creator, is not shortened. (v. 1-4).
 - ✓ For in the interim, He paid the price for their sins. **"I gave my back to the smiters, I hid not my face from shame and spitting."** Because of His atoning work, Israel is called to re-gather and become His servants in the last days (v. 6)..
 - ✓ Thus indeed, the first beautiful feet upon the mountains are His, which bear the prints of the nails which pierced them in atonement for men's sins. **We only, lovingly, follow after Him.**
 - ✓ He calls Israel, who are now in darkness, to come back to His light (v. 11). Those who insist on kindling their own light, will perish in sorrow (v. 12).
- In Ch. 51 the Lord calls descendants of Israel to awaken and return to Israel's ancient covenants which were made with Abraham.
 - ✓ "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you (v. 2)"
 - ✓ All things of the earth in which they might trust will perish, but **Christ's salvation will endure "forever"** (v. 6).
 - ✓ They should not fear any man who may revile them (v. 7), for they will be destroyed.
 - ✓ Those who do hearken and come, as did ancient Israel (v. 9-10), shall obtain "gladness and joy" (v. 11).
 - ✓ The Lord has put His words in Israel's mouth, so He might **"plant the heavens"** (v. 16). This refers to the Eternal Seed which those who live up to their Covenants will be blessed with if faithful. From this Eternal Seed the heavens will continue to ever expand!

- Ch. 52. Christ calls Israel to awake and “put on their beautiful garments.” Here He speaks of ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are His feet, [and ours], if we seek to spread His message (v. 7). Eventually the Lord will “make bare His holy arm in the eyes of all nations” (v. 10), when all will see what He has done with Israel in the Latter-days.
 - ✓ As we come, He warns us to avoid all uncleanness (v. 11).
 - ✓ Our gathering and all our blessings will come because of Him:
 - “As many were astonished at [Him]; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: [But through His sufferings He] shall sprinkle many nations;” and even kings will come to acknowledge His greatness through His great works (v. 14,15).

- Chapter 53: How beautiful are the words of Isaiah. What a joy it is to read this chapter and experience its wondrous prophecies of Jesus Christ!
 - ✓ He would grow up as “a root out of a dry ground” [during a time of apostasy] (v. 2).
 - ✓ He would have no comeliness; outward beauty to draw men to Him (v. 2).
 - ✓ He would be “despised and rejected of men; a man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief” and men would “esteem him as nought” (v. 3).
 - ✓ He suffered all things for our sakes: bore our griefs; carried our sorrows; was wounded for our transgressions; and took upon Himself our stripes, that we might be healed (v. 4-5).
 - ✓ While He was falsely condemned, He “opened not his mouth. He [was] brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (v. 7)”
 - ✓ “He made His grave with the wicked,” and “was numbered with the transgressors” (v. 9, 12).”
 - ✓ “Who shall declare his generation?” [for He would have no descendants on earth] (v. 8). However, those who accept Him become His children. [This is the meaning behind v. 10, “he shall see his seed.” See also Mosiah 15:10-13].
 - ✓ For the sake of us all, the Father accepted Christ’s loving offering of Himself to pay the great price needed to satisfy the Law of Justice for our sins (v. 10-11).
 - ✓ Hallelujah! Christ will be greatly rewarded for the sacrifices He has made for our sakes (v. 12).

As I found while bearing my testimony in Ireland, the purpose of reading Isaiah is not just understanding. It is also to feel the beauty and power of Isaiah’s words and to be moved by them.

Our continual prayerful searching should show that with additional work we can all understand Isaiah. And when we do so it can be a joyful and beautifully uplifting experience.