

THE GLORY OF ZION WILL BE A DEFENSE

(ISAIAH 1-6)

OT LESSON #36

By Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION: This amazing thing happens in 1st Nephi.

And I did read many things unto them which were written in the books of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah . . . (IN 19:23)

Think of that! Nephi is reading Isaiah to Laman and Lemuel to help the believe in the Lord their Redeemer. They probably understood his language and his idioms better than we do, but those were not the elements that would increase their testimonies. Nephi must have believed that even hard-hearted and backsliding Israelites could be encouraged and fortified spiritually by reading Isaiah. And if it will work for Laman and Lemuel, it will clearly work for us. I know has worked for me. The more I love Isaiah, the more I love the Savior, and the more I love the Savior, the more I love Isaiah.

I am excited by the opportunity to discuss this remarkable prophet in the next few lessons. I hope you are too. I have learned that I can learn to understand his teachings. The task requires attention and exertion, but the results are certainly worth the effort.

If you have a few moments, open your scriptures to Isaiah and begin reading in any place. You will not have read far before you find stirring and powerful testimonies of the Savior. For example:

(12:5) Thou has done excellent things

(25:1) Thou hast done wonderful things

(8:12) His hand is stretched out still

(6:3) Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory

(40:18) To whom then will ye liken God?

(40:31) They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength

(42:6) The Lord . . . will hold thy hand and will keep thee, and will give

thee for a covenant of the people, and a light of the Gentiles.

There is at least one other important reason for making a careful search of this book.

It just may be that my salvation (and yours also!) does in fact depend upon our ability to understand the writings of Isaiah as fully and truly as Nephi understood them (Bruce R. McConkie, "Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah," Ensign, Oct. 1973, 78).

1. ISAIAH DESCRIBES THE CONDITIONS OF THE WORLD IN THE LAST DAYS.

Much of Isaiah appears to be trans-generational. The messages apply equally well to his day and to ours. The warnings are clear.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:
But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword:
for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it (1:19,20).

Israel has often refused and rebelled.

Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment (Isaiah 1:5,6).

Isaiah writes to a society that is almost terminally ill. The culture is filled with disease. Why?

Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers (2:6)

The footnote for "be replenished from the east" (6a) says, "are filled,

supplied with teachings, alien beliefs.” The footnote for “please themselves in” (6c) says, “strike hands with, or make a covenant with . . .” Do we allow ourselves to be influenced by alien teachings? Do we make covenants with the children of strangers?

Other descriptions of the world in the latter days are given in the Gospel Doctrine Manual. I will write the references here for those who do not have that book.

- A. 1:3-5
- B. 1:11-15
- C. 2:7-8
- D. 2:11-12
- E. 3:5
- F. 3:9
- G. 3:14-15
- H. 3:16-24
- I. 5:8
- J. 5:11,12
- K. 5:20
- L. 5:21
- M. 5:24

You will find other descriptions throughout Isaiah. Watch for them. Ponder them and try to find application in your own life.

2. ISAIAH COUNSELS THE FAITHFUL TO STAND IN HOLY PLACES.

The conditions mentioned in Isaiah saturate the world, but in Isaiah 4:5,6, Isaiah tells us how to find safety from these conditions.

And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain (Isaiah 4:5,6; this passage is a bit clearer in 2N14:5,6).

Isaiah here identifies three places that will protect us from heat and storm and rain—from the spiritual assaults that will confront us in every other part of our lives. They are (1) every dwelling place of mount Zion, (2) her assemblies. & (3) a tabernacle [the temple]. Can you see why these places will assist us in our efforts of repulse the world. Our homes, our gatherings of saints, and our temples are places where we can control the environment. And since we live in a world were Satan “maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about” (D&C 76:29), we must have places were we can find refuge. These holy places are the very opposite of the world which becomes less and less holy with each passing moment.

D&C 45:32

But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

D&C 87:8

Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. Amen.

D&C 101:22

Behold, it is my will, that all they who call on my name, and worship me according to mine everlasting gospel, should gather together, and stand in holy places;

Isaiah provides a wonderful prophecy about temples in his writings:

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 many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2,3).

This prophecy must be a reference to all the temples now in use.

Elder McConkie noted that the gathering of Israel referred to in Isaiah, with mention of the mountain of the Lord's House " 'in the tops of the mountains,' is figurative language for places where temples will be built."

"The gathering of Israel is into the stakes of Zion in the nations of the earth. This temple is a fulfillment, as far as Australia is concerned, of that prophecy of Isaiah. It is just as literal a fulfillment as the building of the temple in Salt Lake ("News of the Church," Ensign, Oct. 1982, 77).

Isaiah has something else to say about the blessings of the last days. This prophecy follows right after the temple passages quoted above.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (2:4).

This is a description of a millennial condition, but the language in which it is presented is instructional. What would happen if we were to take all the revenue now being used in this world for military affairs and apply it to the solving of social issues like hunger?

In the Gulf War lasted seven weeks About \$70 billion was spent fighting it. For example, one Tomahawk Cruise Missile costs \$750,000. We used 288 in the war. The AGM-88 HARM missile costs \$200,000. We fired at least 1000 of them. And so on.

The Plain Truth from March 1987 observed the following:

1 M-16 automatic rifle costs \$660. With that money you could purchase 82 garden spades at \$8.00 each.
1 M-1 Abrams Tank costs 2,800,000. That money could purchase 6,222 farm bullocks at \$450 each
1 F-15 fighter jet rings in at \$27,000,000. 1,350 78 horsepower tractors at \$20,000 each would ring in at the same price. The bill for 1 trident missile submarine is 2,000,000,000. That amount would purchase 25,000 homes at \$80,000 each.

American statesman Charles Sumner, commenting on the cost of war, once said: "Give me the money that has been spent on war, and I will clothe every man, woman, and child in an attire of which kings and queens would be proud. I will build a schoolhouse in every valley over the whole earth. I will crown every hillside with a place of worship, consecrated to the gospel of peace." (Gordon B. Hinckley, "In Grateful Remembrance," Ensign, Mar. 1971, 20).

3. ISAIAH DESCRIBES THE GATHERING OF ISRAEL IN THE LATTER DAYS.

The scattering of Israel is a product of her wickedness. In spite of the unceasing efforts of God to redeem his people, Israel will not submit.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant (5:4-7).

Isaiah intersperses his descriptions of the apostasy and/or rebellion of Israel with warm and moving invitations from the Lord to Israel, invitations like this one:

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isaiah 1:16-18).

Isaiah 5:26-29 is a description of the latter-day gathering of Israel. The imagery is of a war. Words like ensign and arrows and horses are all images of battle in the Old Testament. The gathering will be a time when the strength of Israel goes forth to battle with Lucifer for the souls of men. The missionary force is the army marching to war.

And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly: None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it.

The hiss in verse 26 is a “whistle; i.e. signal for the gathering” (fn 26b). Someone has said that missionaries must be *hissers* before they become *kissers*. I love the description of these wonderful youth and older couples as lions and young lions.

When my grandfather traveled from Kanab, Utah to Salt Lake for Conference, the trip took two weeks. But Isaiah foresaw a day when elders would travel to their fields and return home very rapidly.

None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:

I went to Brazil without removing my shoes, and I came home as quickly.

This force is unstoppable! Brigham young spoke of the effect of Mormonism in the last days.

When the wicked have power to blow out the sun, that it shines no more; when they have power to bring to a conclusion the operations of the elements, suspend the whole system of nature, and make a footstool of the throne of the Almighty, they may

then think to check "Mormonism" in its course, and thwart the unalterable purposes of heaven. Men may persecute the people who believe its doctrines, report and publish lies to bring tribulation upon their heads, earth and hell may unite in one grand league against it, and exert their malicious powers to the utmost, but it will stand as firm and immovable in the midst of it all as the pillars of eternity. Men may persecute the Prophet, and those who believe and uphold him, they may drive the Saints and kill them but this does not affect the truths of "Mormonism" one iota, for they will stand when the elements melt with fervent heat, and the heavens are wrapt up like a scroll and the solid earth is dissolved. "Mormonism" stands upon the eternal basis of omnipotence. Jehovah is the "Mormonism" of this people, their Priesthood and their power; and all who adhere to it will, in the appointed day, come up into the presence of the King Eternal, and receive a crown of life (JD, vol 1, p.88).

4. ISAIAH RESPONDED WILLINGLY TO HIS CALL TO BE A PROPHET.

Isaiah saw the Lord at the time of his call to the prophetic ministry. Where did he see the Lord? Where was he sitting?

Compare Isaiah 6:3,4 with D&C 110:2,3. How are these two visions the same? How are they different?

How did Isaiah react to seeing the Lord? How would you react? Why is Isaiah fearful of seeing the Lord? He is worried about his own iniquity, but he is also worried about the people among whom he lives? If the Lord came to your home, would you worry about those who live there under your stewardship?

Isaiah knew the temple as a place with a great altar where sacrifices were offered and burned. From this altar a heavenly being removes a coal. Where does he place it (6:6,7)? What is its effect on Isaiah (6:7). Are there other places in the scriptures where sin is cleansed by fire?

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire

(Matthew 3:11).

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, *then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost*; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel. But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received *the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost*, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me . . . Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and *then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost* (2N31:13,14,17, emphasis added).

The question in 6:8 seems to grow out of Isaiah's awareness of the iniquity of Israel. "Whom shall I send?" Isaiah's answer is the answer of all true disciples: "Here am I; send me." When the Lord asked for a man to take the message of repentance to King Noah, it was Abinadi's response. When someone was needed to call Herod to repentance, John the Baptist must have said or felt words like these. When the Lord needed a messenger to Rome, Paul presented himself. *Here am I; send me!*

Who will take the message to your neighbors and friends? Who will tell your brother-in-law and your uncle's boss? Who will take a stand against pornography in your community? Who will volunteer following retirement to go to Lansing or Laos or London?

And we cannot say, "I'll go if it doesn't take too long. How long would Isaiah be expected to serve?"

Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate . . . (6:11).

Since Isaiah is not immortal at this time, the Lord is probably telling him that the responsibility he has accepted is a lifetime duty. And so it is for us. Failure to act will result in solemn consequences.

No assignment is menial in the work of the Lord, for each has eternal consequences. President John Taylor warned us: "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty." And who of us can afford to be responsible for the delay of eternal life of a human soul? If great joy is the reward of saving one soul, then how terrible must be the remorse of those whose timid efforts have allowed a child of God to go unwarned or unaided so that he has to wait till a dependable servant of God comes along ("To Learn, To Do, To Be:" President Thomas S. Monson, C.R., April 1992).

CONCLUSION: I suspect that very few people have fulfilled their callings with as much faithfulness as Isaiah. His devotion to the work and the to the Lord, and his eloquence in testifying of the solemnities of eternity (see D&C 43:34) were part of the inducement for the Lord to say,

"AND now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah (3N23:1).

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