

O.T. LESSON #38  
by Ted L. Gibbons

# “BESIDE ME THERE IS NO SAVIOR”

READING: ISAIAH 40-49

**INTRODUCTION:** A lovely young lady sat in my office a while ago. Her life, which had begun with joy and service and obedience, had descended through successive layers of iniquity and decadence to a place where blackness enveloped her and she was miserable. Like Lehi of old, *she beheld herself* (see 1N8:7). Like the prodigal son, she had spent too much time with the pigs and had *come to herself* (see Luke 15:17). She did not like what she saw in her mirror each morning and came at last to the one unfailing source of help. She came to my office seeking the Savior, because she had finally realized that there was nowhere else to go.

In chapters 40-49 of Isaiah, the prophet pens a moving word-portrait of the character of God. He tells us over and over, “There is no one else who can do for you what Christ can do. When all other hopes fade, when all other friends vanish, when all other sustenance diminishes, he will be there, extending the arms of his mercy to us all the day long.

Note: Once again, the lesson in the Gospel Doctrine Manual is written in a format very much like the one I use when I teach the chapters. I will follow that outline closely, adding as I can observations and insights to help you in your study of Isaiah.

## 1. ISAIAH TEACHES THAT THE SAVIOR IS INCOMPARABLE.

To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? (Is. 40:18)

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One (Is. 40:25).

Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time,

and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any (Is. 44:8).

To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? (Is. 46:5)

Micah said it this way: "Who is a God like unto thee . . .? (Micah 7:18).

I love Joseph Smith's description of God in D&C 109:77.

O Lord God Almighty . . . thou sittest enthroned, with glory, honor, power, majesty, might, dominion, truth, justice, judgment, mercy, and an infinity of fulness, from everlasting to everlasting.

If your family members or best friends were asked to choose eleven adjectives to describe you, it is probable that they would not choose the ones Joseph used here.

In the D&C we find this description:

For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy and claimeth her own; justice continueth its course and claimeth its own; judgment goeth before the face of him who sitteth upon the throne and governeth and executeth all things. He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever (D&C 88:40,41).

You can open your yellow pages and find thousands of services available to you—from architects to zoologists. You can, and do, and usually should call them when help is needed in their area of specialization. But if you have a problem, even a problem of colossal proportions, and you cannot find anyone who can help, where will you go?

Isaiah not only asks this question, he gives the answer many times:

Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour (Is. 43:10,11).

Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God (Is. 44:6).

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else (Is. 45:5,6).

Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God (Is. 45:14).

For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else (Is. 45:18).

Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else (Is. 45:21,22).

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me . . . (Is 46:9).

## 2. ISAIAH DESCRIBES THE SAVIOR'S INCOMPARABLE QUALITIES.

Cain, the Pharaoh, and King Noah all asked similar questions. Cain said, 'Who is the Lord that I should know him?' (Moses 5:16) Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go" (Ex. 5:2) King Noah said, "Now when king Noah had heard of the words which Abinadi had spoken unto the people, he was also wroth; and he said: Who is Abinadi, that I and my people should be judged of him, or who is the Lord, that shall bring upon my people such great affliction? (Mosiah 11:27).

Isaiah could have answered their questions. He knew who the Lord was and the characteristics that made him so remarkable. It seems likely that the following portrayals of Christ are the kinds of things Nephi read to his brothers (1N19:23) to help them believe in the Lord their Redeemer.

### A. NO ONE CAN TEACH HIM OR COUNSEL HIM.

Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? (Is. 40:13.14).

My sister gave me a wonderful definition of a fanatic. *A fanatic is someone who does what God would do if he had all the facts.* How often do we search for exceptions to the rules and commandments because we suppose that our circumstances are different from those that confront others. For example, "I would go to Sunday School, but . . ." or "I would complete my home teaching every month, but . . ." or "I would accept a call to be the WEBLO advisor, but . . ."

My conviction is that most of the time when we say such things, we are guilty of trying to counsel the Lord. As Marion G. Romney cautioned, "Others want "to serve the Lord but only in an advisory capacity," (Cited by Neal A. Maxwell, "Popularity and Principle," Ensign, Mar. 1995, p. 15).

### B. HE NEVER FAILS NOR FAINTS NOT GETS WEARY

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth

not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Is, 40:28-31).

When others might be incapacitated by exhaustion, the Savior “fainteth not, neither is weary.” He is the unfailing resource in our own times of weakness, and “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”

**C. HE CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH AND THE NATIONS.**

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? . . . Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing . . . Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in . . . Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth . . . I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded . . . For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else (Is. 40:12,15,21,22,16; 45:12,18).

I made a broom holder in 7<sup>th</sup> grade shop. I think it was the most impressive thing I ever made. How about you? What have you made that is worth recording in a journal or in a book? Next time you go outside, have a look

around at some of the stuff God made. My Master's project at ASU was a multimedia slide presentation about the creation. I used three projectors and hundreds and hundreds of slides to try and communicate the beauty and variety of the creation. Every time I showed it people came forward to thank me for my work. I almost always had the same response. "Anyone can learn to focus a camera and take a photo of a frog or a flower. But how many people can *make* a frog or a flower. The real gratitude should go to God, who made it all to begin with."

**D. HE CAN HELP WHEN NO ONE ELSE CAN OR WILL.**

When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water (Is. 41:17,18).

In John 4, the Savior told the Samaritan woman about the only fountain that could be "in [her] a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Jeremiah warned about other kinds of wells.

For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13).

When we find that our material possessions will not bring us joy, we may recognize with perfect assurance that there is a source of joy that will never run dry.

**E. HE IS NEVER DISCOURAGED WITH US. HE NEVER QUILTS OR GIVES UP BEFORE HIS WORK IS DONE.**

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. e shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law (Is. 42:3,4).

Reflect on the number of times the Lord has reached out to Israel and invited them to return.

O ye people of these great cities which have fallen, who are descendants of Jacob, yea, who are of the house of Israel, *how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*, and have nourished you. And again, *how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen; yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem, as ye that have fallen; yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not. O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, *how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart (3 Nephi 10:4-6, emphasis added).

He will do the same for us.

For thus spake the prophet: The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up (1 Nephi 19:11).

He will call again and again those who wander. Amulek said, "I was called many times" (Alma 10:6) Isaiah wrote

And behold, according to the words of the prophet, the Messiah will set himself again the second time to recover them; wherefore, he will manifest himself unto them in power and great glory (2 Nephi 6:14).

The phrase "the Messiah will set himself" is interesting. And the scriptures seem to indicate that he will do it not just a second time but as often as there is any hope of success.

F. HE WILL TURN DARKNESS INTO LIGHT AND MAKE CROOKED PATHS STRAIGHT.

And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them (Is. 42:16).

His light is a better light to live by than those we kindle ourselves. When we try to live usefully in our own ways and by our own intellect, we subject ourselves to unhappiness.

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow (Is. 50:11).

His Spirit gives understanding to us in our confusion. How often in the confusing and crooked passages of your life has the Spirit brushed against you and enabled you to say, "Oh! Now I see!"

#### G. HE WILL STAY WITH US IN OUR TRIALS.

BUT now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life (Is. 43:1-4).

The floods and fires of mortality are meant to test us, but they are also opportunities for the Lord to bless us. He will not protect us from trials, but he will assist us as we deal with them. It is often in our adversity that we come to know of his generosity.

#### H. HE WILL BLOT OUT OUR TRANSGRESSIONS.

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own

sake, and will not remember thy sins (Is 43:25).

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee (Is. 44:22).

To *blot out* means to remove, to erase, to destroy. When the Lord forgives us, he does not shelve our sins for later consideration. He eliminates them. Of course he will not remember them, for they will have ceased to exist. They will be as invisible as if covered with a thick cloud. The view through my back window is of Mt. Timpanogos. It dominates the skyline and minimizes everything else in the valley. But there have been days when thick clouds have settled along the western edge of the mountains and Timp has been invisible.

#### I. HE BLESSES OUR FAMILIES.

I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. (Is. 44:3,4).

This passage reminds me of the promises repeated on page 11 of the September 2002 Ensign. God will bless the children of the righteous because of the sealing power. One of those quotes has been cited by Orson F. Whitney, Boyd K. Packer, Robert D. Hales and others.

The measure of our success as parents, however, will not rest solely on how our children turn out. That judgment would be just only if we could raise our families in a perfectly moral environment, and that now is not possible.

It is not uncommon for responsible parents to lose one of their children, for a time, to influences over which they have no control. They agonize over rebellious sons or daughters. They are puzzled over why they are so helpless when they have tried so hard to do what they should.

It is my conviction that those wicked influences one day will be overruled.

“The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught a more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father’s heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God.” (Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, p. 110.)

- J. FORGET “FOOTPRINTS.” HE CARRIES US ALL THE TIME.  
Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you (Is. 46:3,4).

I have seen about 8000 different copies of the lovely piece entitled “Footprints.” I suspect you have too. I have always appreciated the sentiment, but Isaiah suggests here that there are never two sets of footprints—that we never have to meet the challenges of mortality alone.

- K. HE WILL NEVER FORSAKE US NOR FORGET US.  
But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me (Is. 49:14-16).

My wife and I left our baby in an infant carrier one evening on the floor at the elementary school where we had gone to sign up an older son for Little

League baseball. My wife remembered and we returned for the infant while he was still sleeping, but that momentary lapse offers sufficient truth of the Lord's statement that a mother might forget a nursing child. But he will never forget us. The marks in his hands are a constant reminder to him of his covenant people.

### **3. WE MUST BE CAREFUL THAT WE ARE NOT DECEIVED BY BABYLON.**

Notice the claims made by Babylon in the verses below. Do they sound familiar?

Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, *I am, and none else beside me*; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children . . . . For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, *I am, and none else beside me* (Is. 47:8,10, emphasis added).

Babylon is often used as a symbol for the world in the scriptures. Can you discern the ways in which Babylon tries to attract and hold your attention and your allegiance and divert you from your trust in the power of the Lord? The Lord in our day has given us a solemn warning about the attractions of Babylon.

Go ye out from Babylon. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord (D&C 133:5)

Yea, verily I say unto you again, the time has come when the voice of the Lord is unto you: Go ye out of Babylon; gather ye out from among the nations, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (D&C 133:7),

Go ye out from among the nations, even from Babylon, from the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon (D&C 133:14).

**CONCLUSION:** We must forsake the world and attach ourselves to the only being who can make us truly and eternally happy. There is no one like him.

In the three verses quoted above, the Lord tells us to go out of Babylon. In the same section he tells us where we must go. Using language reminiscent of the parable of the ten virgins, the Lord informs us that there is no oil in Babylon that can light our lamps and our way to the wedding (see Matt. 25:10).

Wherefore, prepare ye for the coming of the Bridegroom; go ye, go ye out to meet him (D&C 133:20).

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