

COMMENTARY ON THE WRITINGS OF ISAIAH

A Witness of Christ and His Glorious
Millennial Reign

By

Bryan R Barton

Second Edition

INTRODUCTION

This book began as a personal project as I answered questions from family members and continued on as a personal quest to better understand the writings of Isaiah. I didn't want to leave a single verse unexplored, undefined, or unclarified. This work was never meant to be a scholarly review of the writings of Isaiah but merely my own thoughts and ideas of what the words of Isaiah mean to me. I have included additional references from other books of scriptures that came to mind as I wrote down my thoughts for each verse and described how many verses relate to other scriptural writings of various prophets, including the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. This book in no way represents the official views of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, of which I am a member. It is only a representation of my own thoughts and views, as well as my testimony, regarding the writings of an ancient prophet. Isaiah's writings testify of the validity of Christ, the Lord Jehovah, who created the earth, was born in the meridian of time, died and atoned for the sins of all who will accept His great sacrifice, and will return in the later day to stand upon the earth to reign as king of kings and Lord of Lords. Of this, I add my testimony that Jesus is the Christ, and the writings of Isaiah testify of such.

When I was a young man, I decided to read the Book of Isaiah so I could fulfill the Lord's commandment to read the words of Isaiah (3 Ne 23:1). As I began to read, I realized that I didn't understand a single verse. It was all foreign to me, the people's names, the names of cities, whether it was the Lord speaking or Isaiah; it was all "Greek" to me. But one thing I remember so vividly and never forgot was that the spirit of the Lord was burning so powerfully in my heart that I felt like I was on fire on the inside. The Holy Ghost was with me so powerfully, telling me to keep going. Don't stop learning. Keep trying to understand His words, and you'll get there. After that, I felt inspired to learn everything I could about the Book of Isaiah. I purchased books of commentary by various authors to gain an understanding of the History of the people, which helped to bring clarity to His writings.

Many of the chapters of Isaiah speak of the birth of the Savior, His earthly ministry, death and resurrection, the latter-day judgments that will be poured out upon the wicked in the last days of great tribulation, and His glorious reign upon the earth. We have been commanded by the Savior to study the words of Isaiah (3 Ne 23:1, 2 Ne 25:8), for he said, "great are the words of Isaiah,"..." for they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

The sixth chapter of Isaiah reveals how this wonderful, righteous man was called to be a prophet and describes how he felt to stand in the presence of the Father while the Father spoke to him. After he got over His initial shock of being unexpectedly summoned to appear before the Lord, the Father asked for volunteers to write the words of the Lord. Isaiah excitedly leaped at the chance to serve the Lord in this capacity but then thought for a moment about the details of the Lord's requirements. He asked the Father, "how long?" meaning, how long will it be before the children of Israel understand His writings and rejoice over them? The Lord tells him, until the

cities be waste without inhabitant, the houses without man, the land be utterly desolate, and men have moved far away. The Lord was telling him His writings would not be for His day but for a day far into the future.

The Father was asking him to write in such a way as to hide the meatier meanings of His words so that His wicked children would continue to be blind and ignorant of the wonderful feast of spiritual knowledge His writings would produce. I suspect that Isaiah felt very disheartened to realize that His words would not be fully understood nor appreciated until the latter days (2 Ne 25:8). It is my belief that the Lord commanded Isaiah to write this way to protect His wicked children from being exposed to more doctrine than they were prepared to live. If the Lord gave them greater knowledge, they would receive a greater level of condemnation. Without that knowledge, however, they will not be exalted and receive all that the Father has as joint heirs with Christ (Rom 8:16-17, D&C 84:38).

It is my hope that my commentary on the writings of Isaiah will be an inspiration to those who seek for greater understanding of His words and gain a stronger testimony of their value in our day.

CHAPTER ONE

The people of Israel are apostate, about 720 to 594 B.C., rebellious, and corrupt; only a few remain faithful. The people's sacrifices and feasts to the Lord are rejected. The Lord calls them to repent and work righteousness. Zion will be redeemed on the day of restoration.

Isaiah Text

Commentary

- 1 The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Hotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah.
- 2 Hear, Oh Heavens, and give ear, Oh earth: for the LORD hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.
- 3 The ox knoweth His owner, and the ass His master's crib: Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

This is an opening statement to introduce who this prophet is (1 Ne 19:23), who he is related to, and gives a timeline of when he lived according to the span of four Kings that lived during the span of his ministry, from about 720 BC to 594 BC. Isaiah married a daughter of king Hezekiah, so his family was likely of nobility and wealth.

Isaiah speaks the word of the Lord and pleads with the people who will read his words. He pleads with them to change their hearts and listen to the Lord. The Lord's message is one of great disappointment. His children have been raised with true and living prophets, and they have drifted away from the memory of those days. Their history was one of the pillars of fire in front of the tabernacle, but now they have forgotten and rebelled against Him.

The Lord, speaking with Isaiah like a friend would speak to another, bemoans the loss of His children, saying, my children have rebelled against me. Even the ox knoweth his owner who feeds him every day, and the ass knows where his master keeps his stall where he eats and sleeps and has safety, but the children of Israel act like they have no God, no master, and no one they owe for all their blessings.

Isaiah Text

Commentary

4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: They have forsaken the Lord; they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger; they are gone away backward.

The Lord continues to bemoan this great loss. He calls them evildoers and the children of corrupters. Their parents, instead of teaching their children the way of the Lord, teach them to ignore the Lord and to be worldly, either with apathy toward spiritual matters or showing outward disdain towards God and His commandments (D&C 38:10-12). These priesthood holders provoke their God to anger for having been given so much, and yet show anger when reminded of the God of heaven, not unlike a child raised in a wealthy home who rebels against his goodly parents and blames them for all his troubles.

5 Why should ye be stricken anymore? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

The Lord is pleading with His children, saying, why do you continue to do things that make me punish you? The Lord says, come unto me and rebel against me no more, and I will heal you. But the Lord knows the hardness of their hearts and knows they will continue to rebel.

6 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.

What they could do for themselves they do not, like an ugly infected sore that needs medical attention. They do nothing to better their situation. There is only one healer for this type of affliction, and that is reconciliation with God. The very least they could do for themselves is to apply ointment to soften the surrounding skin, so it doesn't crack and bleed and worsen the infection and pain. But they do nothing. In comparison, the Lord is asking them to humble themselves and ask for His forgiveness. He has promised that though their sins are red like crimson, His cleansing power will make them clean and white as snow (Isa 1:18).

Isaiah Text

- 7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

Commentary

This rebellion and gross wickedness will bring the judgments of God upon them. They have ignored the warning of their prophets, imprisoned them and killed them. The shedding of that sacred blood must be answered upon the heads of all the people, and war will come to their land. If they do not hear the voice of the Lord through His prophets, whose voice is soft and gentle like the waters of Shiloh (Isa 8:6-7), the Lord will raise His voice with great thunder with hundreds of thousands of soldiers from a neighboring country that will decimate the land, burn whole villages and cities with fire, and devour everything of value before their eyes. How long before this very thing will happen to America? Have we not rebelled against our God and ignored His commandments? The Lord says that if we will not obey his commandments, he will give other nations power to take our land away from us, and we will be scattered and smitten (2Ne 1:10-11). If we do not change our hearts and humble ourselves before the Lord, we will see foreign troops invade America.

Isaiah Text

Commentary

8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

The Lord reminds us that He is speaking to the men and women of His church who have forgotten the ways of the Lord. This is a warning for our day that if the people of His church ignore the Lord, they will be left alone as a cottage without walls, without the protections he has afforded them since the days of Moses. The Lord has softened the hearts of kings and military leaders around the world so they will not invade their land.

Because of wickedness, He will withdraw His protecting spirit, which keeps neighboring countries from invading their land. These protections are dependent upon their level of wickedness and abominations. Once the cup of the wrath of God is full, the response throughout the scriptures of God's wrath is measured in war, pestilence, and famine.

9 Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Isaiah is stating that if it were not for the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel), the Lord would have called down fire from heaven and destroyed them as he did Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord will not be mocked when it comes to those who hold His priesthood. If His priesthood holders will not live up to their covenants, He will destroy them when the majority of the people turn from the Lord and commit abominations, such as making light of sacred things or ignoring sacred responsibilities. To preserve and rebuild Jerusalem, the Lord allowed a small number of them to return and rebuild their city.

Isaiah Text

Commentary

10 Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom. Give ear to the law of the Lord, ye people of Gomorrah.

Isaiah speaks to the rulers, the Jewish Sanhedrin or ruling counsel, who were the political and religious leaders of Isaiah's day. Isaiah calls them the "rulers of Sodom" and the "people of Gomorrah" in hopes of getting through to their understanding as to what will happen to them if they do not change their ways. Fire will not come down from heaven and destroy them, but the Lord will allow a nation from afar to destroy them and carry many of them away captive.

11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? Saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of the goats.

The Lord again reasons with the people to get them to wake up and realize that vain oblation without true devotion means nothing to Him. The burnt offerings, the fat of rams, and the blood of bullocks have no significance if the people are not following this prayer ritual with real devotion to their God and a sincere effort toward repentance of their evil ways. To do so is an abomination and heaps upon their heads greater condemnation for using the priesthood in the temple without true devotion.

12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

The Lord is asking: Why have you come to present your sacrifice before me? He is also saying: How dare you tread upon the sacred courts of my temple to perform a sacred ordinance using the priesthood without the slightest thought as to the purpose of the ritual or the required devotion of the heart that I require. Remember how the Lord dealt with Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-2), the sons of Aaron, when they treated lightly the sacred ordinances of the temple during the days of Moses. They offered strange (unauthorized) fire before the Lord, and the Lord caused fire to devour them.

Isaiah Text

Commentary

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn assembly.

The Lord drives the point a little further to show the level of His disdain for vain oblations (prayer and sacred spiritual rituals). He calls out their ritual feasts as evidence of their abominations: the new-moon feasts, Sabbath suppers, and special solemn assemblies were all used as mere social gatherings but had very little, if any, of their original meaning and devotion toward their God. The Lord states: I cannot. Nearly yelling, No More! Away with!

I imagine the great King Jehovah saying, get it away from me. I cannot take any more of these vain rituals where your hearts are far from me, and you have no understanding of my word. It is iniquity to where even your solemn assemblies are used for mere social glad-handing and where the true purpose of encouraging each other towards deeper Godly devotion and dedication to greater spirituality is summarily avoided (Isaiah 29:13, Matt 15:9).

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

Very rarely does the Lord speak such strong words, but for a people that perform sacred ordinances in the temple using the holy priesthood or conduct feasts unto the Lord while acting with such hypocrisy, the Lord has become fed-up to the point where He says He hates them.

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

The holding up of hands or spreading open hands before God is a sign of surrender to God's will. But, with open hands and spread forth arms, they have the outward appearance of piety, but inwardly, their hearts were far from God. The hands they raised to God in prayer were the very hands that would commit murder and then return to the temple to perform sacred rituals. God was disgusted with their hypocrisy (Jer.7:9).

Isaiah Text

Commentary

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| 16 | Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil. | Even with all these sins, the Lord reminds them of a way for them to become acceptable before Him through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, they must be willing to forsake their sins and stop their evil acts. |
| 17 | Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the widow. | They must learn to do well, and He tells them what is important to Him : relieve the oppressed and care for the needs of the orphans and widows. These are the ones who plead unto God for relief and justice, and God has charged His priesthood holders and members of His church to care for their needs. Would it not be one of the greatest atrocities if the ones who were charged to look after the widows and orphans were the very oppressors the widows and orphans had prayed against? |
| 18 | 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. | God shows them how beautiful they can become if they are willing to repent. He paints a picture of how they will look and feel once they are clean of their blood (crimson red) and sins. It may appear to be too late for them or that they have too much sin. However, He assures them they can be white as wool through their faith in Christ, but they must be willing to give up their sins and evil practices to obtain this cleansing. |
| 19 | If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: | The rewards of being willing and obedient is to eat the good of the land, representing wealth and security. |
| 20 | But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord had spoken it. | The alternative will be true if they reject the offer. War and famine will come to their land. |
| 21 | How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. | The Lord laments how far Israel has fallen. Once, they were a delightful people full of righteous judgment and justice, but now bribes and murder fill their ecclesiastical judgment seats. |

Isaiah Text

Commentary

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| 22 | Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water. | They are no longer a pure people. They are compared to the refining process of silver. When silver is heated, the impurities (dross) become exposed and thrown away. His people have become as dross and considered of little value to the Lord now. |
| 23 | Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the Fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. | The princes are the kings and those they have placed in authority. Isaiah was a prophet during the rule of four kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. It appears that these kings conducted the business of the people by how much they could pay. Those who could not place money in the hands of the king or his officers, the fatherless and widow, found a deaf ear for their cause. This greatly angered the Lord. |
| 24 | Therefore, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: | The king, his officers, and the priests who took the offerings for the people in the temple had a responsibility to look after the fatherless and the widow. That is what the temple offering was for. The Lord had not ignored the prayers of the fatherless and widows, and he expected the princes of Israel to see to their needs. When they ignored them or took unfair advantage of them, the Lord was particularly displeased and declared, "I will avenge me of mine adversaries." I would not want to be on the Lord's list of enemies on the day of judgment. |
| 25 | And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: | The Lord vows to lift His hand of judgment and destruction against His adversaries (Israel) to purge away their dross and take away their tin, which is a way of saying, I will punish my people and put them through the refiner's fire of affliction until they humble themselves before me and repent of their sins. (The refiner's fire Mal 3:2-3). |

Isaiah Text

Commentary

26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

The day will come, in the Latter days, when the Lord will restore the judges of Israel as they were in the beginning. The restoration of the gospel through the prophet Joseph Smith Jr., modern-day revelation (The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods). These are evidence that the Lord has restored His righteous judges as in the beginning (days of Adam and Eve), and they are now presenting an offering to the Lord in righteousness (Malachi 3:3). The culmination of the Lord's work in the last days, before His second coming, will eventually become a faithful city, a city of righteousness when the Lord leads His faithful people in the Latter days to establish cities like the New Jerusalem in multiple locations throughout the world wherever His saints are located. These will be places of safety and protection from the wicked.

27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

Speaking of the Latter days, the Lord will show that with righteous judgment (priesthood power and authority), His people and those who come to join those cities of refuge, by the millions, will create a city of righteousness.

28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.

In the days of great tribulation, the Lord will call for His people to leave (come-out-of) the wicked cities of the world and travel to locations where His priesthood power will protect them. Then, when there are no righteous among them, the wicked cities are ripe for destruction, and the Lord's wrath will be poured out upon them without measure. They that have forsaken the Lord will be consumed.

Isaiah Text

Commentary

29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.

The oaks and the gardens, or worldly pursuits the wicked have desired and worked their whole lives to obtain, will not save them from the destructive power of the Lord. They will be very ashamed on the day of judgment when they see that their desires and creations (money, property, business, fame, or military might) are of no value to save them or to prepare them to enter into the presence of the Lord.

30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.

Using the imagery of the oak tree, Isaiah shows that it takes a lifetime to see an oak tree become fully mature and provide shade for the house or property. They will find that their lives have been spent in vain, as a tree that no longer has the ability to produce leaves and a garden that has no access to water.

31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

Tow are short fibers of the flax plant that were used for a wick in the making of candles. The fibers are very soft and flammable. One spark and it will burn quickly. Those who have built empires on earth will find those possessions, and empires will burn as quickly as tow, and they will be powerless to keep their wealth, possessions, property and power from being burned or destroyed in the Lord's day of judgment upon the wicked.