

Isaiah notes for 9/27 from Bro. Hart

This week, Isaiah's message shifted from warning Israel and Judah and he is now talking to the surrounding nations as God's [prophet to the nations and the world. We don't know how or if these messages were delivered to those kings. Perhaps the warnings were rhetorical speech that was meant to corroborate to Israel what Israel had been told. Warnings aimed at Babylon, Moab, Assyria, the Philistines, and others (all enemies to the Hebrew) did come to pass, along with warnings to Jacob's posterity- showing to Israel that God is real and not some minor provincial deity. He is over all nations, and his word does come to pass. God can keep these bullies in check if Israel and Judah will just return to Him!

God continues his message not to ally with other nations, but with Him. Egypt which had been in decline for some time is now starting to get stronger and is tempting as a friend against those to the North. We know that Israel sent emissaries to Egypt during this period, but apparently Hezekiah nor any of the other kings ever closed any deals.

SIDE BAR- Hezekiah's reliance on the Lord when Assyria besieged Jerusalem is expressed beautifully in a prayer in **II Kings 19:14-19** and is worth reading again in our study this week. He went to the temple (should we not do the same when we are beset with great distress in our own lives?) and literally laid his problem (in the form of Sennacherib's letter) before the Lord and both physically and symbolically put his face to the ground and prayed for his people.

We asked last week why Nephi included these chapters in his record to his select smaller record for his people. Maybe it's because there is always the promise that even after all Jacob's falling away, they will return. Much of that language is in these chapters... this week and last week.

Chapter 14. Babylon is cited by Isaiah as a real political threat and metaphorically as a spiritual threat. Many other prophets repeat this theme at the Lord's behest. But rest is promised (another recurring theme- 'you'll have troubles in this world, but fear not; I have overcome the world. And you can overcome it if you will unite with me.) and Jacob will even be able to take up a parable against Babylon in the end as the Lord defeats her politically (through Persia) and spiritually through Christ's victory over sin. They are both represented in Isaiah's metaphor comparing Babylon with Satan's defeat in verses 1-23.

Isaiah 25:9 and the Book of Revelation (penned by John the Apostle) say similar things about conquering death... here's an invitation for you to look up those verses as homework.

Isaiah 29- A marvelous work and a wonder... Lot's of duality in these verses. We see Professor Anthon turning away Martin Harris, but do we not see others turning away from a book that is sealed to them because of pre-judgement or rejection of Christ altogether? It is interesting to note that in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord uses the wording... "A marvelous work is about to come forth..." multiple times in the first few verses. I heard the comment in a podcast that He never uses the phrase again after the publication of the Book of Mormon... Hhmmm... And the

deaf shall hear and the blind shall see the words of the book (29:18). Great imagery there too.

Isaiah 29:23-24 Jacob sees his children return to the Lord and come out of error into understanding... again and again he speaks of the time when the children of the covenant will return. Have we not a cause for hope for the same blessing as some of our children return from error and come to understanding because of keeping the covenants we have made with the same Redeemer?

There are many references this week to the fact that the Lord will divide the righteous from those who reject Him, but He will accept those who repent and bring Israel home for the covenant's sake.

Isaiah notes for **10/4** from Bro. Hart

There is a lot of current Biblical scholarship noting great changes in basic doctrines from 700 BC to 600 BC, or Isaiah until when Lehi and Nephi leave Jerusalem. Most of those changes get summarized clearly in Deuteronomy. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophetic texts clearly oppose the writers of Deuteronomy; sometimes openly and sometimes in veiled language to save their lives and continue their ministries. The doctrines below typify this shift and ignore the prophets' plea to return to the message in the law, not just the keeping of the law. Many teachings were suppressed or altered in form or meaning notably by Josiah and those following him after Israel returns from Babylon. My object is not to find fault with Josiah's efforts. He was trying to fend off attackers, unify his kingdom and standardize the faith of his people and get rid of those he felt were subversive to Judah. He was young when he came to the throne and was subject to lots of pressures. Nor was he the only king to make changes to religious practice in Judah and Israel. Doctrines that were altered include, among other things;

1. A vicarious Savior who comes down from heaven and gives his life for his people. Increasingly, the sacrifices offered in the Temple become ritual, without a reason... simply keeping the law. This tendency becomes even more entrenched after the return from Babylon under Cyrus, King of Persia. The long-awaited Messiah became understood mainly by the language that described Him putting Israel's enemies under his feet- pretty political. That's what many of the Jews were hoping and looking for when He finally came 7 centuries later.
2. A gloriously perfect Supreme Being with a body. We were created in God's image. Moses and those he took back up the mountain both saw Him and talked with face to face with Him. But after the return from Babylon, the teachings (in theory, Moses' own words?!) stated that Moses neither saw nor heard Him. The Temple became the place where the Lord's name dwelled rather than the Lord Himself. God's nature had been altered.
3. By Royal decree, sacrifices were taken from family practice and allowed only at Jerusalem. Apparently, many Jews did not by this, because we see Lehi offering sacrifice

in the wilderness as if it were still expected. Also, according to many scholars, much of First Temple worship practices were either deleted or altered, including the renewing of covenants at the Temple each year between God and his people, with the Kings and Queens presenting the people to the Lord and placing them under covenant. There are many things published in recent scholarship on First Temple practice that mirror teachings in our own temples... a heavenly council, a Son of Deity who descends to redeem God's children, and other things.

4. The clear prediction of Judah's captivity under Babylon, and their subsequent return. It appears many Jews interpreted Jerusalem's miraculous protection from the Assyrians and some statements in their cannon that Jerusalem would never fall nor would they be taken captive as prophets were declaring... and if there would be no captivity, there would never be a return...

For our discussion, Isaiah states in multiple places that Israel has 'gone out of the way' or 'broken the covenant' and 'changed the ordinances.' It seems to be these and similar teachings that Lehi cries against while Laman and Lemuel claim that the Jews 'keep the law and are a righteous people.' Nephi sides with Isaiah, Jeremiah and his father Lehi here, calling them 'plain and precious things' that were removed from their records and teachings. What could be more precious than the Savior's divine role, God's covenant with Israel or the nature of God and his loving recovery of his covenant people?

There is a Hebrew word that is interpreted as 'mystery' or 'secret' in the King James Old Testament temple dialogues, but can also be a 'circle of friends', or a 'divine council'... images that are familiar to modern temple attendees and which have carried sacred connotations since before our first parents were placed in the garden. Isaiah uses the words and images of 'eyes to see' and 'ears to hear' ...language given him by the Savior. The Savior spoke to his 12 disciples in similar terms. When they asked why He spoke to them in parables, he replied, 'it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.' Do we have eyes to see and ears to hear? We may not all gain the same understanding of a particular passage, but it's important that we are trying and asking and sharing with each other.

Chapter 42 of Isaiah is the first 'servant song'

Did you read the language from our Hymn, "How Firm a Foundation" in our reading this week? Beautiful in its original source... If you didn't catch it, see if you can find it.

Isaiah 42:18-19 talks about the Lord's servant being 'blind and deaf'... that's an unusual description for a servant of God, especially since the servant Isaiah talks of most is Jesus... the JST clears up the seeming dichotomy in this particular servant message.

The new things we have here in the last days help us to understand Isaiah
"...I will do a new thing"

Where does Isaiah agree with Jeremiah 16:14-15 (where the Lord will bring the children Israel, not from Egypt in the South, but from the North and restore them to their lands.)

Isaiah prophesied about the Babylonian captivity and about Cyrus being raised up by God to return his people to Jerusalem.

Another vivid and beautiful piece of imagery... “beauty for ashes.” where do we find it?

Jacob’s children get ‘carried on their shoulders...’ and kings and queens become their ‘nursing mothers’... is this 1) missionary work, 2) the restoration of Israel’s lands, or 3) the nation of Israel being set up by larger nations post-WWII?

Last week we asked, ‘Why did Nephi choose these words as Isaiah’s most important and as part of Nephi’s special smaller plates- the things he deemed most precious for his children?’ This week we can ask, ‘What is special enough about Isaiah’s record that Mormon also choose them again as ‘pleasing’ and included them in his abridged record? Isaiah made the cut twice.

Alright, I’ll go ahead and ask it this week instead of waiting. ‘Why did the Savior make a big deal of Isaiah when He spoke to the Nephites in the Americas?’ Isaiah got special mention by the Savior... so all who read the Book of Mormon need to pay attention to Isaiah at this point.