

## Isaiah 50-57 Show Notes

### Ep 172: Isaiah 50-57

Isaiah 50-51: The Lord Speaks to Israel

Isaiah 50 and 51 are set in the middle of the sections of chapters directed to Israel. (Isa. 48-52.) The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob expressed the value of these chapters when, after quoting Isaiah 49-52:2, he said he wanted to teach his people "concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel." (2 Ne. 9:1.) Isaiah speaks specifically to covenant Israel in chapters 50 and 51.<sup>1</sup>

### How Jacob uses Isaiah 50-51

John Thompson shows how Jacob's use of Isaiah takes place at the Fall Festival at the temple using form and tradition criticism.<sup>2</sup> From the structure and themes of 2 Nephi 6-10, **one may conclude that Jacob's speech was given in connection with a covenant-renewal celebration** that was most likely performed as part of the **traditional Israelite autumn festivals required by the law of Moses**. Moreover, Jacob seems to use certain Isaiah passages as part of his speech in order to encourage the Nephites to renew their covenants by reminding them of the Lord's promises, giving them a hope in their salvation and future restoration. **These blessings are made possible because of the Messiah, who is characterized as the ideal king, suffering humiliation, even death, but eventually triumphing over all.** Concerning Christ and the requirements of the law of Moses, Nephi states, "And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments" (2 Nephi 25:24-25). This statement and others like it indicate that the law of Moses was understood and observed among the Nephites, and that they had hope in the fact that it pointed to Christ and would have its fulfillment in him at some future day. With this in mind, it is interesting that immediately following Jacob's sermon Nephi states, "Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been

<sup>1</sup> Victor Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, Deseret Book, 1982, p. 419.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson explains: "Biblical scholars have developed various techniques for determining the setting of a text. Although these methods do not provide infallible or irrefutable results, they can add to the understanding of a text's meaning and history. Form criticism and its complement, tradition criticism, are two such techniques. Scholars use comparative studies to uncover forms or patterns within a text and then try to identify the traditional occasions in a culture's history when such forms or patterns were used. **A modern example of form-criticism and tradition-criticism can be seen in the following scenario:** A form-critical scholar who studied the words spoken at an LOS sacrament meeting or even in a home of LDS members would discover that, in general, a set pattern reoccurs time and time again: (1) Often the phrase "Our Father in Heaven" or some variation of those words is used at the beginning of this pattern; (2) following this, words denoting thanksgiving to God are used; (3) after giving thanks, the speaker begins to supplicate or ask for blessings; (4) finally, the phrase "In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen" consistently provides a closing statement. This has a specific "form," although there are variables, and it is possible that the form-critic would call this pattern a "prayer." A tradition-critical scholar would seek to establish the traditional setting" for such forms, possibly recognizing that prayers are most often spoken at the beginning and ending of the day or meeting, and even occur at the beginning of meals. John S. Thompson, "[Isaiah 50-51, the Israelite Autumn Festivals, and the Covenant Speech of Jacob in 2 Nephi 6-10](#)," *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, FARMS, 1998, p. 123-150.

given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him" (2 Nephi 11.4). **This statement makes perfect sense in the context of Jacob's words about Christ's coming** (see 2 Nephi 9.4-5; 10:3) and **especially if Jacob was indeed participating in a festival that was required by the law**. Since the Israelite festivals were included in the law of Moses, the Nephites likely carried them out with full understanding that the elements of the festival all typify Christ and point to his coming. In support of that realization, Nephi and Jacob could have drawn on no prophet more appropriately than the great seer Isaiah.<sup>3</sup>

In bridging chapters 50 and 51, it is helpful to see how another ancient prophet teaches with these chapters. Jacob quotes chapters 50 and 51 in the Book of Mormon. (2 Ne. 6-8.) He says that he has read these things so that he might teach his brethren "concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel." (2 Ne. 9:1.) Using Isaiah 50:1-3 as his text, **Jacob teaches his listeners that the Jews will be restored to the true church of God and reestablished in the lands of their inheritance** (Palestine). (2 Ne. 9:2.) **This restoration took place when the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity between the years 538-515 B.C.**<sup>4</sup>

Jacob and his Nephite brethren were concerned about their fellow Jews who were in a serious state of spiritual apostasy when Lehi's family left Jerusalem. In 2 Nephi 9:3, Jacob comments that he is telling the Nephites these things so that they may rejoice. He speaks eloquently of the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh to atone for the sins of mankind. (2 Ne. 9:4-27.) His discourse on the Atonement corresponds with Isaiah 50:4-9.

Jacob then turns his attention to the remainder of chapter 50, verses 10-11, exhorting his people not to rely upon their own wisdom ("light of your fire") but to "fear the Lord" and "listen to the voice of his servant":

When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. (2 Ne. 9:28.)

Jacob concluded the day's teaching to his brethren by speaking extensively on the final judgment, the time when all men will stand before God to be judged. (2 Ne. 9:29-54.) This discourse parallels the end of verse 11 of Isaiah 50. Continuing his discourse the next day, Jacob speaks more on the servant song, applying it to Christ. (2 Ne. 10:1-6.) In the rest of chapter 10 of 2 Nephi, Jacob applies Isaiah 50 to teach the full meaning of the covenants the Lord has made with the entire house of Israel: (A) he speaks of the Jews accepting Christ in the last days and returning to the lands of their inheritance (2 Ne. 10:7-9; compare Isa. 49:22-23); (B) he foresees America (Zion) being an inheritance to the righteous Gentiles (2 Ne. 10:10-18; compare 3 Ne. 23:2-4); and (C) he concludes by reminding the Nephites of their heritage and reviewing the Lord's work with the house of Israel (2 Ne. 10:18-25).<sup>5</sup>

Thompson points out that Jacob is using the themes from the Israelite Festal Drama in conjunction with Isaiah's words to testify of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that I assert that the best ancient commentary on the words of Isaiah are the prophets closest to his time period, namely, the Book of

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<sup>3</sup> Thompson, p. 143-4.

<sup>4</sup> I (Mike Day) see this as a partially fulfilled prophecy. The Jews were returned to the lands of their inheritance, but have not as yet been "restored to the true church and fold of God" (2 Ne. 9.2).

<sup>5</sup> Ludlow, p. 423-4, emphasis added.

Mormon prophets who show an understanding of his words. Their words help modern readers unlock Isaiah's message. Thompson shows that almost all the elements of the ancient covenant/treaty pattern are clearly illustrated in Jacob's sermon.<sup>6</sup> He then beautifully illustrates how the themes of the Autumn Festival are woven throughout Jacob's sermon. These themes include 1) judgment, 2) remembrance, 3) creation, 4) garments, 5) the name of God, 6) sacrifice, 7) fasting, 8) confession and repentance, 9) the law, 10) sacral kingship, 11) the humiliation and eventual enthronement of Yahweh.<sup>7</sup>

1. God's relationship with Israel carries on (Isa. 50.1-3).
  - a. The Israelites viewed themselves metaphorically as God's wife and also as God's children. If the former, they worry that God has divorced them and therefore cannot take them back (cf. Jer. 3.1; Deut. 24.1-4). If the latter, then God has sold them away (cf. Exod. 21.7-11; 2 Kings 4.1). But **God insists that no divorce has taken place**, and that the children remain God's own property. 2: Behind God's frustrated words here may lie the failure of the exiles to accept the message of consolation. **Only a small number of exiles took the opportunity to return to Zion after Cyrus** (the Persian king who conquered Babylonia) allowed them to do so. Dry up the sea, an allusion to the splitting of the Reed Sea (see Exod. chs 14-15) and also to stories of divine combat at the time of the world's creation (see 51.9-11, Hab. 2.8---9; Ps. 74.13-15; 89.14; Job 26.5-13).<sup>8</sup>
2. The third servant song (Isa. 50.4-11).<sup>9</sup>
  - a. "I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isa. 50.6).<sup>10</sup> See [Matthew 26.67](#), "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands."

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<sup>6</sup> Thompson, p. 124-128.

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, p. 128-142.

<sup>8</sup> Berlin and Brettler, [The Jewish Study Bible](#), Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 885, emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup> The other servant songs are found in Isa. 42.1-9, 49.1-6, and 52.13-53.12. A German scholar, [Bernhard Duhm](#) (1847-1928), coined the phrase "servant song," and it has stuck ever since. The servant songs (also called the servant poems or the Songs of the Suffering Servant) are four songs in the Book of Isaiah in the Hebrew Bible, which include Isaiah 42:1-4; Isaiah 49:1-9; Isaiah 50:4-11; and Isaiah 52:13-53:12. The songs are four poems written about a certain "servant of YHWH" (Hebrew: עַבְדַּ יְהוָה, 'eḇed Yahweh). Yahweh calls the servant to lead the nations, but the servant is horribly abused by them. In the end, he is rewarded. Some scholars regard Isaiah 61.1-3 as a fifth servant song, although the word "servant" (Hebrew: עַבְד, 'eḇed) is not mentioned in the passage. This fifth song is largely disregarded by modern scholars.

<sup>10</sup> These verses, comprising the third servant song, portray the "servant" as the epitome of righteousness. As with the other servant songs, controversy surrounds the interpretation of these verses. The servant could be any number of people or peoples. Perhaps it is the prophet Isaiah himself telling how he has been insulted, or perhaps it is the nation of Israel that has suffered persecutions throughout the long centuries of their dispersal from the land of Palestine. However, as far as the Bible records, Isaiah was not persecuted during his ministry. Also, the verses do not seem to apply to Israel as a nation, since they suffered a just punishment for their disobedience, whereas the servant suffers undeservedly for others. **The most acceptable identification is Christ, because these verses describe events in the life of Jesus.** In reading this servant song, however, we should not limit these references to the life of Christ, but should try to apply them to many of God's chosen servants. Ludlow, p. 422, emphasis added.

Many scholars have noted how in the New Year Enthronement festivals that the king would be ritually humiliated as part of the process. John Thompson explains:

- b. "I have set my face like a flint" (Isa. 50:7).<sup>11</sup>
- c. "He is near that justifieth me... the Lord God will help me" (Isa. 50:8-9).
- d. A Command to all people (Isa. 50:10-11).
  - i. Those in darkness are to trust God (Isa. 50:10).

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It was typical of ancient Near Eastern societies to renew or reenthroned their kings during New Year celebrations. However, in many societies, before the actual reenthronement ceremony, the king was ritually humiliated or sacrificed (or a proxy would be sacrificed). For example, in the akitu festival of ancient Mesopotamia, **the king was ritually humiliated before being allowed to enter the inner sanctuary and sit upon his throne**. The high priest would strip him of any royal insignia; **he was then slapped on the cheek and his ears were pulled**; and then he was to bow down and confess before the god Marduk that "he had not committed any sins or neglected Esagila and Babylon." In the *sed-a* festival of ancient Egypt-the king (or his proxy) was sacrificed and then "buried," ritually reenacting the mythical defeat and death of Osiris by his evil brother Seth. While the king was in his tomb, Anubis, the jackal-headed priest, in conjunction with Isis and Nephtys, used magic to resuscitate the king while the priests and the people outside the tomb called to the king: "Awake! Arise and live!" Afterwards, the king, fully justified after having conquered his enemies, including death, assumed his position on the throne. Israelite parallels to the chain of events in these reenthronement rituals can be seen in Eaton's discussion of Yahweh's kingship as reflected in the Psalms:

"The form of worship attested by the Psalms apparently did not present an idea of Yahweh having been seasonally deprived of his kingship, now to be won back. The tradition of lamentation ... thinks of Yahweh as holding himself far off, as seeming inactive or indifferent for a while .... **Admittedly there are traces that in some periods the worship may have envisaged Yahweh as held awhile by enemies and affected by the drowsiness of death** (Ps. 78:61-6; 1 Sam. 4-6). But the great majority of our texts concentrate on his victory, ... his ascension to his throne-centre on Mount Zion and in heaven. The dramatic counterfoil was provided, it seems, by lamentation of society's need for redemption from the Pit, from the death-state of drought, sin, and all the personal and national disorders that came when God was distant, silent, displeased." (JH Eaton, [Festal Drama](#), p. 12, emphasis added)

Like the Psalms, the Isaiah portions in Jacob's sermon reflect much of this traditional scenario as well. For instance, **the Isaiah passages refer to the fact that Yahweh "gave [his] back to the smiter, and [his] cheeks to them that plucked off the hair**. [He] hid not [his] face from shame and spitting" (2 Nephi 7:6, parallel to Isaiah 50:6). In spite of Yahweh's humiliation, the people of Israel call to Yahweh: "Awake, awake! Put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days. Art thou not he that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not he who hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" (2 Nephi 8:9-10, parallel to Isaiah 51:9-10).

The humiliation and apparent dormancy are not permanent, however, for Yahweh triumphs over his enemies and his might is extolled: "Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make their rivers a wilderness and their fish to stink because the waters are dried up, and they die because of thirst" (2 Nephi 7:2, parallel to Isaiah 50:2). "I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. And the Lord is near, and he justifieth me. Who will contend with me? Let us stand together. Who is mine adversary? Let him come near me, and I will smite him with the strength of my mouth" (2 Nephi 7:7-8, parallel to Isaiah 50:7-8). According to Eaton's reconstruction of the enthronement of Yahweh at the Feast of Tabernacles, once Yahweh's enemies are conquered, he makes a procession to his throne on Mount Zion and takes his seat.<sup>48</sup> This may be reflected in 2 Nephi 8:3, parallel to Isaiah 51:3: "The Lord shall comfort Zion .... Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." John S. Thompson, [Isaiah 50-51, the Israelite Autumn Festivals, and the Covenant Speech of Jacob in 2 Nephi 6-10](#), as found in Parry and Welch, [Isaiah in the Book of Mormon](#), FARMS, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> The prophet, knowing that he speaks for God and is supported by God, does not feel really shamed even in the midst of public humiliation, and he can set his face hard as flint even as it is spat upon and his beard torn. Robert Alter, [The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary](#), W.W. Norton & Company, 2019, p. 792.

- ii. Those who walk in the light of their own fires will lie down in sorrow (Isa. 50.11).<sup>12</sup>
- 3. The Lord Encourages Israel (Isa. 51.1-8).
  - a. "Look to the rock from which ye are hewn... Abraham your father, Sarah that bare you... the Lord shall comfort Zion!" (Isa. 51.1-3).<sup>13</sup>
  - b. "Fear not the reproach of men!" (Isa. 51.7).
- 4. Israel's Lament and God's Response (Isa. 51.9-52.12).<sup>14</sup>
  - a. Israel recalls God's past victories and beg the Lord for help (Isa. 51.9-11).
  - b. God responds, "I am he that comforteth you!" (Isa. 51.12).
  - c. "I divided the sea!... I have put my words in your mouth... Thou art my people... Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem!" (Isa. 51.15-17).
  - d. "Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets" (Isa. 51.20).<sup>15</sup>
  - e. The reversal: Those that caused Israel to suffer will drink of their own brew (Isa. 51.22-23).
  - f. The Great Exchange: Israel takes the Place of Babylon (Isa. 52.1-6).<sup>16</sup> See also Isa. 47.1-9.

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<sup>12</sup> In contrast to those who follow the Lord (v. 10), Isaiah speaks in verse 11 to those who "walk in the light of their own fires" (KJV). This refers to those who refuse to hear the Lord through the voice of his servants, and thus become a law unto themselves. (D&C 88:35.) This is a major problem in the world today: "They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world." (D&C 1:16.) There is no righteous reward for those who refuse to follow the Lord. They shall "suffer a miserable fate," including eternal sorrow (v. 11; see D&C 133:70-74). Ludlow, p. 423.

<sup>13</sup> This is the historical overview portion of the treaty/covenant formula. Isaiah is reminding his hearers that God covenanted with Abraham to bless his seed, that is, that he would gather and save Israel. See: Thompson, p. 126.

<sup>14</sup> In the first part of this composition, the people pray for deliverance, bemoaning God's apparent abandonment of them. In the second part, God responds at length, assuring them that they have not been forgotten. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 888.

<sup>15</sup> There are many ways this can be seen, but essentially this has to do with the death and destruction of their children/warriors in battle. I see this fulfilled in both the old and new worlds.

<sup>16</sup> This "Great Exchange" also represents the enthronement of Israel as king of the world, under the direction of the great king of the cosmos. For we see in these verses the children of Israel putting on sacred vestments, sitting upon a throne, and having their feet established (see 1 Nephi 21.13 in connection with Isa. 52.7). Baker and Ricks explain:

When the king and the Ark of the Covenant entered the Holy of Holies, Jehovah, having reestablished his earthly kingdom, symbolically returned to his own throne in the heavens and left the mortal king, his adopted son and heir, to preside in this world. **The king's legitimacy was confirmed by his actually taking his seat upon the throne of God. This was important, for the king was still Adam.** He had regained his garment of light, and could reclaim his place on the earthly throne of God. Symbolically everyone in the audience had also participated in all the rites of the drama. **Thus, Jehovah had created a nation of priests and sacral kings.** Therefore, sitting upon the throne under the wings of the cherubim represented not only priesthood power and temporal majesty but also security and peace, as is expressed in the 63rd psalm, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice" (Psalm 63:7). [See also Ps. 17.8, 36.7, 57.1, 61.4, 91.4] Mowinckel asserted: "In the cultic drama he represents David: Yahweh is represented by His holy ark, by the 'footstool' before the throne on which He [God] is invisibly seated. ...It is the king who receives Yahweh's promises, His blessings, and His power; and he transmits them to the community which he represents." (Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, p. 84). The sacred Ark of the Covenant, serving as the footstool to the throne of God, represented the authority of God in three ways: (1) It was the means—provided by Jehovah—by which the king ascended to the throne of God; (2) it contained within it the sacred emblems of kingship, priesthood, and the

- i. “Put on thy garments!” (Isa. 52.1).
- ii. “Shake thyself from the dust, arise, and sit down!” (Isa. 52.2).<sup>17</sup>
- iii. “My people shall know my name!” (Isa. 52.6).<sup>18</sup>
- g. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!” (Isa. 52.7). Abinadi was crossed examined by Noah’s priests regarding this verse (Mosiah 12.19-25).<sup>19</sup>
- h. “Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing,<sup>20</sup> for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring forth Zion” (Isa. 52.8).<sup>21</sup>

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fruit of the tree of life; and (3) it was the place where the king’s feet were “established” after his coronation. Johnson observes that “just as the Ark is the symbol of Yahweh’s Person, so Mount Zion corresponds to the divine Mount of Assembly, and the Temple itself is the earthly counterpart of the divine King’s heavenly Palace.” (Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, p. 75). Thus the king’s being on the throne with his feet securely planted on the Ark of the Covenant was a multi-faceted affirmation of his royal status and of his acceptability before God. It is for this reason that the priests of Noah challenged Abinadi with, “What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers, saying: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings” (Mosiah 12:20-21). The Ark of the Covenant was placed before the throne in the Holy of Holies in the Rock that was believed to be the connecting place between heaven and earth. (Ritmeyer, *Secrets of Jerusalem’s Temple Mount*, 91-110.) Ritmeyer’s report that the Ark was not simply placed on the floor of the Holy of Holies, but that anciently an indentation the same size as the Ark had been carved into the Rock so that the Ark sat in the Rock, suggests that the Ark became an extension of the Rock... In its new role as the footstool of the throne, **the Ark represented the connection between earth and heaven—and the king’s feet were established upon that Ark—symbolically giving evidence that he was also the connection between earth and heaven and therefore the ultimate political and ecclesiastical authority in Israel...** The symbolism is important. The footstool is the way by which one ascends the throne; in the Temple it was the throne of God. That same symbolism reflects a similar purpose for the creation of the earth and the purpose of the people on it. Isaiah wrote, “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool” (Isaiah 66:1). Baker and Ricks, p. 410-411, emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> This is inviting Israel to arise from obscurity, from death, (the dust) and to take her rightful seat on the throne.

<sup>18</sup> This is directly tied into the main message of John 17 and the Savior’s prayer that he has given his followers the name he was commanded to give them.

<sup>19</sup> This idea of kingship being represented by the “establishment” of one’s feet, is represented in a prophecy of Isaiah about the time of the restoration of the gospel. The verse was on the brass plates, but is not contained in the KJV Bible. It reads, “Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for they shall be smitten no more; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted” (1 Nephi 21:13). **Thus the king’s being on the throne with his feet securely planted on the Ark of the Covenant was a multi-faceted affirmation of his royal status and of his acceptability before God.** It is for this reason that the priests of Noah challenged Abinadi with, “What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers, saying: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings” (Mosiah 12:20-21). Baker and Ricks, p. 410. See also: [“Establishing the King’s Feet,”](#) 3/23/2021.

<sup>20</sup> Watchmen are people whose primary interest is the preservation of the kingdom. Here, the watchmen sing in unison, as is symbolized in the ancient Temple by the lifted arms of the Menorah. Baker and Ricks, p. 693. For further discussions of the ancient prayer circle, see Nibley, “Appendix V, Cyril of Jerusalem’s Lectures,” *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 279-83; Nibley, [“Early Christian Prayer Circle,”](#) 45-99; Nibley, “On the Sacred and the Symbolic,” 568-69; Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 313-16; Tvedtnes, “Temple Prayer in Ancient Times,” 79-98.

<sup>21</sup> **The easiest way to visualize people seeing eye to eye is to see them standing in a circle.** Here they are singing, or perhaps speaking in unison. This seems to be a reference to a pre-exilic prayer circle. That idea would fit with Hugh Nibley’s pattern. He wrote, “It is because each prayer circle is a faithful reproduction of the celestial pattern that impulses can be transmitted from one to the other by all who are in a receptive state; the thoughts of those in the circle are concentrated as in a burning glass.” Baker and Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend?*, p. 683, emphasis added. See

- i. “The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations” (Isa. 52.10).<sup>22</sup>
  - j. “The God of Israel will be your rearward!” (Isa. 52.12). This can be seen as a promise of invulnerability.
5. **The Fourth Servant Song** (Isa. 52.13-53.12).
- a. “My servant shall ... be exalted” (Isa. 52.13).
  - b. “His visage was so marred more than any man” (Isa. 52.14).
  - c. “So shall he ~~sprinkle~~ gather many nations, the kings shall shut their mouths at him” (Isa. 52.15).<sup>23</sup> This first bit of Hebrew reads כִּן יִזְהַר גּוֹיִם רַבִּים and the KJV renders it “so shall he sprinkle many nations.”
  - d. “The kings shall shut their mouths at him” (Isa. 52.15).<sup>24</sup>
  - e. “He shall grow up before him as a tender plant... as a root out of a dry ground” (Isa. 53.2). The servant is not specified, but Abinadi and Philip identify him as Jesus Christ (Mosiah 15; Acts 8.26-35).<sup>25</sup>
  - f. “He is despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53.3). **Jesus was a man of sorrow and tragedy.** Sensitive to the suffering of others, Jesus taught, healed, and blessed countless people during his ministry. Yet he experienced constant sorrow and rejection throughout his life. (Matt. 23.37.) Members of his own family and the people in his hometown rejected him at first. (John 7.5; Luke 4.16-30.) His own chosen people, the Jews, rejected his messianic calling (John 1.11; 5.18).<sup>26</sup>

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also: Hugh Nibley, “[The Early Christian Prayer Circle](#),” *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 69. This idea is quoted by Jesus in 3 Nephi 16.17-20; 20.20.32-41 and Abinadi in Mosiah 15.29-16.1, as well as Alma in Alma 36.26.

<sup>22</sup> Baker and Ricks (p. 683) state, “The phrase “the Lord hath made bare his holy arm” is **apparently a reference to the expression of sacred fellowship shown in Psalm 45**,” “And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things,” (v. 4) and Job 40, “Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee” (v.14). For a discussion of this topic, see Todd M. Compton, “The Handclasp and Embrace as Tokens of Recognition,” *By Study and Also By Faith*, 1:611-42.

<sup>23</sup> The JST changes “sprinkle” to “gather” in Isa. 52.15. Robert Alter changes this to “he shall astound many nations,” writing that “the verb is anomalous, and so translation is based on context.” Alter, p. 800. Berlin and Brettler render it “he shall startle many nations” The LXX renders the verse thus: οὕτως θαυμάσονται ἔθνη πολλὰ - “Thus he will amaze many nations...” As to the word gather, the typical Hebrew verb used in the Old Testament is *asaph*, and seems to have no connection with the verb used in this verse. In this way, Joseph is either giving inspired commentary or working to establish the original meaning of the text. There are probably other possibilities I am missing here in my assessment of his role as translator here.

<sup>24</sup> See 3 Nephi 11.8-11, “And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and **they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant**, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them. And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying: Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world” (3 Nephi 11:8-11a), emphasis added. From the early days, the festival expressed the subordination of all heavenly beings to Yahweh (Psalm 29) and expected this acknowledged by all nations.

<sup>25</sup> Ludlow (p. 448) explains, In Isaiah 53.2, Isaiah speaks of the servant as a young plant, meaning he was tenderly raised from being a newborn, helpless infant and developed like all young children. He grew up in the dry, sterile ground of apostate Judaism and achieved a natural, adult appearance like other men. Joseph Fielding Smith states that “it is expressed here by the prophet that **he had no form or comeliness, that is, he was not so distinctive, so different from others that people would recognize him as the Son of God. He appeared as a mortal man.**”

*Doctrines of Salvation* 1:23; see D&C 93:11-17, emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup> Ludlow, p. 449.

- g. “He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53.4). See [Alma 7.11-12](#).
  - h. “He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53.5). See John 19.1-3.<sup>27</sup>
  - i. “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53.6). See Mark 14.46, 50, “And they laid their hands on him, and took him... and they all forsook him, and fled.”
  - j. “He opened not his mouth... as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isa. 53.7). See Luke 23.8-10.<sup>28</sup>
  - k. “Who shall declare his generation?” (Isa. 53.8).<sup>29</sup>
  - l. “He made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death” (Isa. 53.9). See Matt. 27.38, 57-58.
  - m. “When his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed” (Isa. 53.10). See Mosiah 15.11-12.<sup>30</sup>
  - n. “He poured out his soul unto death” (Isa. 53.12).
6. Zion Will Be Rebuilt and Her Children will Flourish! (Isa. 54.1-17).
- a. Jesus quotes this chapter to the Nephites (3 Ne. 22). This must be a message of hope to these people that have experienced a total upheaval in their society.
  - b. As in several earlier speeches, the city of Jerusalem or Zion is portrayed as a woman; see Isaiah 49.14-26; 50.1-3. She is childless (i.e., without inhabitants) and apparently forsaken by her husband (i.e., The Lord). **This passage assures her, however, that God remains her husband and protector and that she will soon have abundant children.** In other words, the exiles will soon return to Judah. The passage as a whole recalls Hosea 1, where similar metaphors convey the message that God will punish but not abandon Israel. This passage confirms the accuracy of Hosea's prophecy of doom while repeating

<sup>27</sup> The JPS version reads, “But he was wounded because of our sins, Crushed because of our iniquities. He bore the chastisement that made us whole, And by his bruises we were healed.” *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 891.

<sup>28</sup> As far as we know, Herod is...distinguished as the only being who saw Christ face to face and spoke to Him, yet never heard His voice. For penitent sinners, weeping women, prattling children, for the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the rabbis, for the perjured high priest and his obsequious and insolent underling, and for Pilate the pagan, Christ had words-of comfort or instruction, of warning or rebuke, of protest or denunciation-**yet for Herod the fox He had but disdainful and kingly silence.** James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 635-636, emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> This Hebrew bit reads as follows: מֵעֶזְרָא וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט לְקַח וְאֶת־דָּוָר מִי יִשְׁחַח “From prison and from judgment he was taken, and who will sing of his generation?” (Isa 53.8a, my translation). The Greek bit reads as follows: ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει ἢ κρίσις αὐτοῦ ἤρθη τὴν γενεὰν αὐτοῦ τίς διηγῆσεται “In his **humiliation** his judgment was lifted up/taken up. Who will tell the story of his γενεά/physical descent? (my translation). Elder McConkie summed up the question this way, ““Who shall declare his generation?” (Isaiah 53:8). This means, “Who will give his genesis? Who will reveal his genealogy? Who will give the source from whence he sprang? Who will announce the divinity of the mortal Messiah?” We might also take another text, and this is one that Jesus himself spoke. He said, “Whose son is he?” This is the context: “What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, the son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool?” (Matthew 22:42-44). See: Bruce R. McConkie, [Who Shall Declare His Generation? BYU Speeches, Dec. 2, 1975](#).

<sup>30</sup> “**In the garden and on the cross Jesus saw each of us** and not only bore our sins, but also experienced our deepest feelings so that he would know how to comfort and strengthen us.” Merrill J. Bateman, *Ensign*, May 1995, pg. 14, emphasis added. Abinadi explains that his seed are the righteous, those who follow the prophets (Mosiah 15.11). In the garden and on the cross, Jesus saw each of us and not only bore our sins, but also experienced our deepest feelings so that he would know how to comfort and strengthen us.



Hosea's assurance that the covenant between God and Israel will endure.<sup>31</sup> **This can also be applied to the Nephite nation, as they will experience two hundred years of a Millennial type peace and prosperity.**

- c. "Lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes!" (Isa. 54.2).<sup>32</sup>
- d. "You shall spread abroad to the right and to the left; your offspring will dispossess the nations and resettle the desolate cities!" (Isa. 54.3).<sup>33</sup>
- e. "I will make thy windows of agates and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones!" (Isa. 54.12).<sup>34</sup> Compare this description to Revelation 21.18-21.

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<sup>31</sup> *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 892. Jewish interpreters do not see the servant discussed in this fourth servant song as Jesus, for obvious reasons. Despite their unity in this, they vary as to their interpretation of this passage. Some see the servant as the Jewish people, the nation of Israel, others as a subset of this group. Some see this as depicting Isaiah himself. Others see this as an as of yet unidentified Messiah figure, while even others see this as a description of the prophet Jeremiah. See Alter, p. 801-802 and Berlin and Brettler, p. 890-891. I see these verses as a strong description of the mission of the Savior Jesus Christ. Abinadi also identifies this individual as Jesus.

<sup>32</sup> To members, the term stake is a symbolic expression. Picture in your mind a great tent held up by cords extended to many stakes that are firmly secured in the ground. **The prophet Isaiah likened latter-day Zion to a great tent encompassing the earth. That tent was supported by cords fastened to stakes.** (See 3 Nephi 22:2; Isaiah 54:2.) Those stakes, of course, are various geographical organizations spread out over the earth. Presently Israel is being gathered to the various stakes of Zion. Ezra Taft Benson, *Come unto Christ*, p. 101, emphasis added.

The large movement of Israel's conversion, gathering, and return to the lands of her inheritance will require strong, enlarged stakes in Zion. Growth will be "on the right hand and on the left," with Gentile cities (probably left desolate by the wrath "poured out without mixture upon the whole earth" DC 115:6) inhabited by the children of the covenant. It is from this imagery of Israel's wilderness tent/tabernacle with its cords, curtains, borders, and stakes that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints draws its use of the word stake for the name of its basic ecclesiastical unit. Jeffrey R. Holland, [\*Christ And The New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon\*](#), Deseret Book, 2009, p. 289 – 290.

In revelation the Lord states: "For Zion must increase in beauty and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments" (D&C 82:14). Here the Lord declares a great purpose of a stake: to be a beautiful emblem for all the world to see. The phrase "put on her beautiful garments" refers, of course, to the inner sanctity that must be attained by every member who calls himself or herself a Saint. Zion is "the pure in heart" (D&C 97:21). *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p.149-150.

<sup>33</sup> The Woman Zion, whom Jehovah marries, inherits the place Zion to which she returns (Isaiah 35:10; 51:11; 60:8-9), where Jehovah protects her in his Day of Judgment (Isaiah 4:5-6; 14:32; 46:13) and where he comes to reign (Isaiah 52:8; 59:20; 62:11). From there, however, she spreads abroad and inherits the lands of her oppressors. Gileadi, [Isaiahexplained](#). Accessed 9.5.2022.

<sup>34</sup> I will lay carbuncles as your building stones

And make your foundations of sapphires.

I will make your battlements of rubies,

Your gates of precious stones,

The whole encircling wall of gems. Translation: *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 893. God promises that Zion will be rebuilt as a beautiful and enduring city, secure due to God's incomparable protection.

Robert Alter provides the following explanation: Although this new prophecy begins with "Afflicted, storm-tossed woman," **the focus of the vision of national restoration now shifts from the widowed and/or childless wife to the buildings of the city. The resplendent restored Jerusalem is to be built not out of stones but with precious jewels.** The reader should be alerted that the precise identification of most of these precious stones, as elsewhere in the Bible, is uncertain. The dazzling bejeweled Jerusalem is obviously a poetic hyperbole, but it lays the ground

- f. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isa. 54.13).<sup>35</sup>
  - g. "Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake" (Isa. 54.15).<sup>36</sup>
  - h. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper!" (Isa. 54.17).<sup>37</sup> This is a promise of invulnerability. See Jeremiah's promise of invulnerability in Jeremiah 1.9-10.
    - i. Baker and Ricks note that "many of the psalms contain blessings and promises of invulnerability."<sup>38</sup>
7. An Invitation to Redemption (Isa. 55.1-13).
- a. Wine, milk, bread, and *deshen*/fatness<sup>39</sup> are among the things listed here (Isa. 55.1-3). This is directly connected to Jacob's invitation in 2 Ne. 9.50-51.
  - b. The Lord's word will "accomplish what I please" and be "bread to the eater" (Isa. 55.10-11).
  - c. The participants will sing, and as "trees" they will "clap their hands" (Isa. 55.12).

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for eschatological imaginings of Jerusalem as the glorious City of God. Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, p. 805, emphasis added.

<sup>35</sup> Zion shall begin to be built before the time of Christ's second coming in glory. **The Saints who are gathered in all nations shall live for a season in love and peace** (despite the degenerative condition of the world) **prior to the Millennium**. Because of the goodness of those who have given themselves fully to the Lord and his cause, their meetings shall be pentecostal outpourings: the Spirit of God shall truly burn like a fire in their hearts. **Prophecy and revelation and healings and angelic ministrations shall abound, for the faith of the Saints shall have rent the damning veil of unbelief and opened the heavens to the gifts and wonders enjoyed by the former-day Saints**. And these spiritual experiences shall be multiplied immeasurably after the glorious return of the Master. When wickedness and enmity shall have been removed from this earth, there will be no end to the truths to be taught the miracles to be performed, the outpourings to be enjoyed. Truly in that day "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord." All men and women who choose to do so shall grow in spiritual graces to the point where they are prepared to inherit that glory and power which is enjoyed by God their Father. in that day "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (2 Nephi 21:9; Isaiah 11:9). Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4, emphasis added.

<sup>36</sup> Before Jehovah reverses his people's circumstances, their enemies grow more agitated and oppressive. Forming an integral part of his people's refiner's fire, however, the opposition they receive serves as an opportunity for them to ascend to higher spiritual levels as they prove faithful to Jehovah through the midst of their trials. The descent phase of Jehovah's people nevertheless doesn't last forever, their enemies' violation of their rights being the very thing that brings covenant curses upon them. Gileadi, [Isaiahexplained](#). Accessed 9.5.2022.

<sup>37</sup> **NO weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper!** (Isaiah 54.17 = Judah; 3 Nephi 22.17 = Nephites; D&C 71.9 = Joseph; D&C 109.28 = Modern Saints). This promise (and others like it) are related to the temple promises of invulnerability that were **given to the kings and queens of the ancient world** as well as the promises associated in the temple today given to the Saints of God. These promises come to the recipient from God, who is speaking from the Holy of Holies, so in one way of examining these promises, they are **outside of time**. See: Margaret Barker, [The Temple Roots of the Liturgy](#), p. 7-8, emphasis added. We see a direct promise of invulnerability in [Psalm 21](#), where the king stand before the veil. We also see this in [Psalm 91](#), where the king sat upon the throne and received promises of invulnerability in this world.

<sup>38</sup> Baker and Ricks, p. 201. Some important examples of this are found in Psalms 2, 21, 110. Psalm 21 is the king standing before the veil of the temple, and it concludes with a promise of invulnerability. Not all "war psalms" are that kind of concluding blessing. Eaton identifies several psalms "that reflect warfare: 7; 11; 17; 27; 31; 35; 40; 42-3; 44; 54; 55; 56; 59; 60; 62; 63; 66; 69; 70; 108; 109; 140; 141; in several others the military aspect is not brought out but can reasonably be assumed: 5; 16; 28; 142; 143." JH Eaton, [Kingship and the Psalms](#), p. 130.

<sup>39</sup> This can denote fertility as well as the fatness from the sacrifice.

- d. God exchanges symbols of the fall of man with tree symbols as signs that Israel will not be cut off (Isa. 55.13). *וְהָיָה לַיהוָה לְשֵׁם לְאֹתוֹת עוֹלָם לֹא יִכָּרֵת* “And it will be to Yahweh a name and a sign that is eternal that will not be cut down” (my translation). Instead of briars and thorns we see the myrtle and fir trees.
8. The Gathering of the Outcasts (Isa. 56.1-8).
  - a. “Seek judgment, and do justice” (Isa. 56.1).
  - b. “Let not the eunuch say, Behold I am a dry tree” (Isa. 56.3).
  - c. “I will give them a place and a name... an everlasting name that shall not be cut off” (Isa. 56.5).
  - d. The Lord will gather the outcasts of Israel (Isa. 56.8).<sup>40</sup>
9. The Downfall of Israel and Their Wickedness (Isa. 56.9-57.13).<sup>41</sup>
  - a. The blind watchmen are greedy dogs who look to their own way (Isa. 56.10-11). Note that Isaiah calls them “the beasts of the field” (Isa. 56.9).
  - b. The wicked are called “the sons of the sorceress” and “the seed of the adulterer and the whore” (Isa. 57.3).
  - c. These individuals are slaying children under the cliffs of the rocks (Isa. 57.5).
  - d. The wicked set up their bed. In the words of Margaret Barker, this is bitter wordplay.<sup>42</sup>
  - e. Isaiah 57.7-12 can be seen as a parody of the Babylonian New Year rites.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The strangers in Israel's midst were usually non-Israelites who accepted Israelite rule. (2 Sam. 1:13; Ezek. 14:7; see BD "Stranger.") Strangers were usually not full citizens, though they shared certain legal rights and responsibilities. Some were barred from entering the tabernacle and even the temple courtyards. (Deut. 23:3.) Although often ostracized and even persecuted, the strangers were under God's protection, and he commanded the Israelites to treat them kindly. (Lev. 19:33-34; Josh. 9:1-10:7; see Eph. 2:11-15, 19; Gal. 3:27-29.) The eunuchs were particularly restricted in their social acceptance by the Israelites. Under Mosaic law, eunuchs were not allowed into full Israelite fellowship, especially in the sacrificial, tabernacle, and priesthood ordinances. (Lev. 21:17-23; Deut. 23:1-2.) This law was probably given to Israel because wholeness of body typified spiritual wholeness: those who had been emasculated were considered religiously unfit in Israel. (See BD "Eunuch.") Also, the eunuchs enjoyed no inheritance in Israel, since they could not found a family and carry on a tribal name. They were barren as a "dry tree" (v. 3, KJV). The Lord's beautiful promise in verses 4 and 5 is that the Gentiles and eunuchs, those previously excluded from the complete Israelite covenant, will share God's full blessings if they keep his laws. Ludlow, p. 472-473.

<sup>41</sup> Margaret Barker sees this passage as the followers of Isaiah condemning the Second Temple. Barker, [Christmas, The Original Story](#), SPCK Publishing, 2008, p. 29.

<sup>42</sup> The era of wrath was represented by a harlot ruling in Jerusalem. **She was the evil antitype of the Virgin Daughter of Zion**, condemned in the sixth century BCE by Ezekiel: ‘you played the harlot with the nations, and polluted yourself with their idols’ (Ezek. 23.30). **The last section of Isaiah also described the temple as a harlot because it had been built with foreign money and yet excluded as impure some of the ancient worshippers of the LORD.** In a passage full of words with double meanings, such that their impact is lost in translation, **Isaiah condemned the second temple: it was not a tabernacle, *miškan*, but a harlot’s bed, *miškab* (Isa. 57.7).** The cloud of glory signified the presence of the LORD on Sinai or in the holy of holies; ‘The glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud’ (Exod. 16.10; also 24.15; 34.5; 1 Kings 8.10–11; Ezek. 1.4), **but in Hebrew cloud and sorcerer are written in the same way: *ʿnn*.** **Isaiah described the priests of the second temple not as sons of the bright cloud of the glory, but as sons of a sorceress** (Isa. 57.3). Bitter wordplay like this was characteristic of prophetic and temple discourse. Barker, *Christmas, The Original Story*, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> Douglas Van Buren, [The Sacred Marriage in Early Times in Mesopotamia, \*Orientalia Nova Series, Vol. 13 \(1944\), pp. 1-72\*](#). We have a king setting up the bed, setting up a remembrance, the “enlarging” of the bed, the increase of perfumes and ointments, and sacrifice (Isa. 57.7-12). Van Buren (p. 72) states, “In other places, such as Babylon, Uruk, Nineveh, Ašsur, the rites of the sacred marriage in purely symbolic form are faintly traceable in the elaborate

10. A Promise to the Righteous (Isa. 57.14-21).
- a. A way will be provided for God's people (Isa. 57.14).
  - b. "I have seen his ways, and will heal him. I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners" (Isa. 57.18).
  - c. "I create the fruit of the lips... peace to him that is far off... the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest... there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57.19-21).<sup>44</sup>

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ritual of the great New Year Festival. The fundamental purpose, to promote fertility, for which the rites were originally performed had come to predominate over every other consideration, and the means by which that purpose had primordially been obtained, divine active intercession, were reduced to an abstract mime. A rite which originated in prehistoric times, and was maintained with only temporary lapses throughout three millennia, could not fail to have a profound influence on religious belief. In the course of centuries the rite was purged of its grosser details until there remained only those spiritual elements which composed the basic conception of the great drama of the sacred marriage." Ludlow seems to open the door for this interpretation when he says, (p. 477) "In another context and in keeping with the Babylonian setting for many Isaianic writings, this situation hints at the wicked condition prevailing among the Samaritans and Jews who were left behind in Palestine after Nebuchadnezzar deported many Jews in 586 B.C." He elaborates, "Isaiah highlights two major abuses of the people, immorality and the sacrifice of children. In verses 5, 7, and 8, he plunges into a vivid description of their wickedness. They worship with "great zeal" as they "inflame themselves" (KJV) under the terebinths (v. 5). The precise meaning of this phrase is lost to modern readers, but the Hebrew word translated as "great zeal" or "enflaming yourselves" means to arouse a person sexually. (Edward Young, [The Book of Isaiah](#) 3:402.) Ancient idol worship was inseparably connected with ritual prostitution and fertility cults. Since ancient economies were founded upon agriculture, the people's dependence upon the fertility of the ground was absolute. As the pagan worship developed in ancient cultures, the belief developed that if a farmer had intercourse with a priestess at a local temple and she became pregnant, this was a sign that the fertility god would look favorably upon his crops."

<sup>44</sup> President Harold B. Lee often quoted these last three verses of chapter 57 and applied them in at least three different contexts. For example, **he placed them in the setting of Latter-day Saints struggling against the world** (CR, Apr. 1942, p. 87); **he applied them to different types of Latter-day Saints within the Church** (CR, Oct. 1947, p. 67); and finally, in his last general conference, **he applied them to all who seek wickedness and lack true self-love or self-respect:**

To those who fail to heed the warnings of those who are striving to teach these principles and choose to go in the opposite course, they will eventually find themselves in the pitiable state which you are witnessing so often among us. The prophet Isaiah described the tragic result most dramatically when he repeated the words of God which came to him as he sought to fortify his people against the wickedness of the world, and I quote his words: [Isa. 57:19-21.] As I have prayerfully thought of the reasons why one chooses this course which is dramatically described by the prophet Isaiah—when one who has departed from the path which would have given him peace is like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt—it seems to me that it all results from the failure of the individual to have self-respect. (CR, Oct. 1973, p. 4.)