

Studying Isaiah II

Isaiah's "Book of Comfort" or perhaps the "Book of Reconciliation" (chs. 40–55); his "Admonitions to Restored Judah and Future Israel" (chs. 56–66).

Isaiah 40–45, 48–53, 55, 58; 61–66.

Part 2: Consolation

(40:1–55:13; "Isaiah for the Exile?")

- Comforting Israel (40:1–42:25)
 - **Servant Song 1:** The Servant of the Lord, a light to the nations (42:1–9)
- Restoring Israel (43:1–45:25)
- Babylon to be Judged (46:1–47:15)
- God Loves Israel Despite Her Unworthiness (48:1–11)
- God Proclaims the Redemption of Israel (48:12–22; cf. 1 Nephi 20)
- The Salvation of God's Servant (49:1–57:21)
 - **Servant Song 2:** The Suffering Servant of the Lord (49:1–7)
 - **Servant Song 3:** His Worthiness, Suffering, and Vindication (50:4–9)
 - **Servant Song 4:** The Suffering and Triumph of the Servant (52:13–53:12)

Comforting Israel (40:1–42:25)

- God comforts his people and releases them from captivity (40:1–11)
- His relation to creation (40:12–31)
- God, not idols, will help Israel —or— God’s Trial of the Nations (41:1–29)
 - The “righteous man from the East” in 41:2 is a foreshadowing either of “the Servant” or the Persian king Cyrus
 - Israel, God’s servant (41:8)
- **Servant Song 1: The Servant of the Lord, a light to the nations** (42:1–9)
- A Hymn of Praise (42:10–17)
- Israel Blind and Deaf (42:18–25)

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

3

The Figure of “The Servant”

- Whereas *the Hebrew term “Messiah” is relatively rare* (45:1 for Cyrus and the verbal form in 61:1 for one anointed with the spirit of God), the Messiah can be seen in titles such as **Holy One of Israel, Savior, Redeemer** (although these titles are frequently used for God directly)
- Intriguing is the figure of “**The Servant**,” who appears in **four servant songs** (42:1–9, 49:1–7, 50:4–9, and 52:13–53:12)
- Possible interpretations of the Servant Figure
 - **Ancient Israel**
 - **Restored Israel**
 - **A Prophet**
 - Isaiah himself, another prophet or prophets, sometimes Joseph Smith
 - **The coming Jesus Christ** (first and second comings)
 - Note that any of the suggested prophets could themselves be types of Christ

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

4

43–44: Two Carefully Constructed Chapters Restoring Israel (43:1–45:25)

- Charge: Israel Rejected Her Only Savior (43:1–25)
 - A Israel's future gathering (43:1–7)
 - Self-declaration of divine titles (43:3)
 - B Trial before the nations (43:8–13)
 - Self-declaration of divine titles (43:11)
 - A' Israel's future Blessings (43:14–21)
 - Self-declaration of divine titles (43:15)
 - B' Trial before Israel (43:22–28)
 - Self-declaration of divine titles (43:25)
- The Blessing of Israel's Redeemer versus the Vanity of Idolatry (44:1–28)
 - A The Lord will bless Israel (44:1–5)
 - B None besides Israel's Redeemer (44:6–8)
 - C Futility of idol worship (44:9–20)
 - B' The Lord has/will redeem Israel (44:21–23)
 - A' The Lord will bless Israel (Jerusalem shall be inhabited, 44:24–28)

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

5

More on Restoring Israel (43:1–45:25)

- **Cyrus God's Anointed (lit., "messiah," 45:1–4)**
 - "Thus saith the LORD to **his anointed, to Cyrus**, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him . . . that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me."
 - Apparently Cyrus's function as a "nursing king" to bring exiled Judah back to her homeland was a type of **how the Messiah will gather all Israel**
- **YHWH, Creator and Savior (45:5–19)**
- **Idols Cannot Save (45:20–25)**

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

6

God's Love Despite Israel's Wickedness

- God Loves Israel Despite Her Unworthiness (48:1–11)
 - **Israel Broke the Covenant through false swearing, obstinacy, and idolatry (48:1–11)**
 - **Israel Will Not Be Cast off for the Lord's "Name's Sake" (48:9–11)**
 - "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another."
- God Proclaims the Redemption of Israel (48:12–22; cf. 1 Nephi 20)
 - **Israel's God Can Save His People (48:12–17)**
 - **God Will Save Repentant Israel as He Did in the Past (48:18–22)**

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

7

The Servant Commissioned (49:1–26)

The Salvation of God's Servant (49:1–57:21)

- *cf. 1 Nephi 21*
- **Servant Song 2: The Suffering Servant of the Lord (49:1–7)**
- **The Servant Will Gather Jacob (49:8–12)**
- **The Song of Israel's Redeemer (49:13–21)**
 - "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." (49:15–16)
- **The Gentiles Will Aid the Gathering of Israel (49:22–23)**
 - Persia in the first instance, latter-day Gentiles in the final days
- **The Lord Will Deliver His People with Power (49:24–26)**

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

8

An Impenitent Nation, a Willing Servant (50:1–11)

- *cf. 2 Nephi 7*
- The Covenant: God's Faithfulness to Israel (50:1–3)
 - *Note the covenants images of marriage (and divorce), parenthood (and selling)*
- **Servant Song 3 (50:4–9)**
 - The Servant's worthiness (50:4–5)
 - **The Servant's suffering (50:6)**
 - "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."
 - The Servant's vindication (50:7–9)
- The Lord's Light or Our Own (50:10–11)
 - Trust in the Lord even in darkness (50:10)
 - Those who are their own light will suffer (50:11)

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

9

God Is Able to Save Those Who Come to Him (51:1–52:12)

- *2 Nephi 8*
- Salvation Is near (51:1–8)
 - The Comforting of Zion (51:1–3)
 - Deliverance Is Coming (51:4–6)
 - Do Not Fear or Be Dismayed (51:7–8)
- Interlude (Apostrophe): a Fervent Call for God's Intervention (51:9–11)
 - The Arm of the Lord Is Strong (51:9–10)
 - *Used ancient Near Eastern mythological imagery of a god defeating a sea monster to reflect the Lord's organization of chaos (creation)*
 - The Ransomed Shall Return (51:11)
- God Comforts His People (51:12–16)
- Appeal to Jerusalem (51:17–23)
 - *Note two things [sons] on 51:19–20, used in Revelation 11:3–12 and 2 Nephi 8:19–20*
- Let Zion Rejoice (52:1–12)
 - "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet . . ." (52:7, cf. Nahum 1:15, Mosiah 15:14)

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

10

Servant Song 4: The Suffering and Triumph of the Servant (52:13–53:12)

- “. . . he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation?”

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

11

Part 3: Admonitions to Restored Judah and Future Israel (56:1–66:24; “Isaiah for the Last Days?”)

- Millennial blessings extended to Gentiles (56:1–8)
- Rebuke to the Wicked (56:9–57:21)
- Comfort for the Contrite (57:14–21)
- The Contrast Between Right and Wrong Worship (58:1–14)
- Injustice and Oppression to Be Punished (59:1–21)
- Ingathering of the Dispersed (60:1–18)
- God the Glory of Zion (60:19–22; cf. Revelation 21–22)
- The Good Tidings of Deliverance (61:1–11)
- Final Judgments and Blessings (62:1–66:24)

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

12

The Contrast Between Right and Wrong Worship (58:1–14)

- **True Fasting (58:1–12)**, set perhaps in a Yom Kippur context (Day of Atonement, see Leviticus 16:29)
 - “In the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do *this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him*? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?” (58:3–5)
 - “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? *Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.” (58:6–8)
- **True Sabbath Observance (58:13–14)**
 - “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, *from* doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD . . .”

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

13

The Good Tidings of Deliverance (61:1–11)

- **The Mission of the Anointed Servant (61:1–3; Cf. Luke 4:19–20)**
 - The *second* clear Messiah reference
 - “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn . . .”
- **A Renewed Kingdom of Priests (61:4–9)**
- Rejoicing in the Lord and Righteousness (61:10–11)

3/9/2009

18. Studying Isaiah II

14

Final Judgments and Blessings (62:1–66:24)

- **The Restoration of Israel (62:1–12)**
- **Vengeance on Edom, Representing the World (63:1–6)**
 - *The Divine Victor in Red Robes* (63:2–4; Revelation 14:19–20; D&C 76:107)
- **God's Mercy Remembered (63:1–14)**
- A Prayer for Penitence (63:15–64:12)
- **Epilogue Roughly Paralleling Chapters 1–2**
 - God's Judgment Righteous (65:1–16)
 - *A New Heaven and a New Earth* (65:17–25; cf. Revelation 21)
 - The Rebuke of Hypocrisy (66:1–4)
 - The Rebirth of Israel (66:5–13)
 - The Wicked Destroyed by Fire (66:14–17)
 - *The Lord Will Gather All Nations to Worship Him* (66:18–23)
 - The Wicked's Fate a Warning (66:24)