

Come, Follow Me: February 17-23

2 Nephi 11 – 25

“We Rejoice in Christ”

By Third Hour

There are some “difficult” chapters in this section of the Book of Mormon because they are taken from Isaiah. Nephi chose these chapters because they were the most important for his people. They felt exiled from Jerusalem and these chapters explain the scattering of Israel and their eventual regathering. These chapters also testify of Christ.



Note that these Isaiah chapters repeat seven main themes:

1. The destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel because of their wickedness. They were savagely attacked by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. and the siege lasted 3 years. The Assyrians carried many away and planted pagans from their empire in their place.
2. The destruction of Judea and Jerusalem by the Babylonians around 600 B.C. in three progressively brutal attacks. Many were carried into Babylon. God promised they would be able to return 70 years later.
3. The destruction of Assyria and the destruction of Babylon, both symbols of the destruction before the Second Coming.
4. The scattering of the Jews by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and finally, the Romans, and their wandering and suffering for generations.
5. The physical and spiritual regathering of Israel.
6. The coming of Christ and His rejection and crucifixion, then resurrection.
7. The Second Coming of Christ and the glory and peace of the millennium.

Isaiah is difficult for us to understand for many reasons. (Note that it was also difficult for the Nephites, and they were Jews who lived not too many years after Isaiah.) Isaiah was a poet who used poetic forms when he wrote. In Hebrew, it's possible to capture double meanings, plays on words, and rhymes that don't translate into English. Isaiah was also in vision a lot of the time and putting those visions into words wasn't easy. Sometimes, Isaiah saw future happenings, but talked about them in past tense.

Try an experiment with your group or family. Have someone choose a favorite book or movie that others have not yet read or seen and describe the plot. Normally, the person will relate the story in the past tense, but since you have not read the book or seen the movie yet, for you, the plot is still in the future. Imagine that Isaiah had seen movies, not visions. Is it easier to understand then when he describes them in past or present tense?

A way to make Isaiah more understandable is to jot down the message verse by verse and then read your notes in order (these are from 2 Nephi 12). This can be a family or group project.

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.

In the last days there will be a temple in the mountains and people will come to it from all over the world.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Many people will want to go and learn about God. God will teach us and we'll keep the commandments. During the millennium, the law will come from Zion and the scriptures will come from Jerusalem.

4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks— nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Jesus will judge the nations. They will turn their weapons into farming tools and there will be no more war.

5 O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord; yea, come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways.

House of Israel, come walk in the light. We all need to repent.

6 Therefore, O Lord, thou hast forsaken thy people, the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and hearken unto soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.

Instead of relying on the Lord, Israel looked for help from other nations, followed soothsayers, and married out of the covenant.

Another hint reminds us of the differences between the Occidental (Western) and Oriental (Eastern) mindsets. The western way of thinking is very linear. People from a western culture want to figure out how to get from point A to point B. They think of things as progressing in time. They try to make Isaiah's writings fit that pattern and it doesn't work. Isaiah's thought pattern was based on a multi-layered, multi-dimensional eastern viewpoint.

You can look at Isaiah's collection of messages like a ball comprised of many layers. You remove a layer to find more understanding. Each removed layer reveals more until you reach the central, spiritual knowledge Isaiah is trying to share. That enlightenment is the goal, but the process is more like getting to the core of things by peeling back the package to access revelatory meaning. That's Eastern thinking.

The Law of Moses typifies Christ (2 Nephi 11):

In verses 1 - 3, Nephi tells us why he wants his people to study Isaiah. Most importantly, Isaiah saw Christ, just as Nephi and Jacob had seen Him. Thus, with Isaiah, his people would have three personal witnesses of the Savior.

Then Nephi says he will show his people how to find Christ in the Law of Moses and the Old Testament scriptures in the brass plates.

If we were playing "say the first thing that comes into your mind" and I said "the Law of Moses," most people would retort back, "...an eye for an eye." This is the last thing you should think of. The Law of Moses is a law of **restitution**, not **retribution**. It actually restricted punishments and encouraged the restoration of damaged or stolen goods as part of the repentance process. Restitution was so important, that Jews restored four-fold. So if I killed your ox, I would have to plow your fields for you until I gave you four oxen and then I would go to the temple to offer a sin offering.

Many of the references to Christ **have been removed** from the five books of Moses in the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), but the laws and practices (including the holidays) indeed typify Christ. Note the difference between the biblical description of Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush ([Exodus 3:2-4](#)) and the account in the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price ([Moses 1](#)). Which account teaches best about the Savior? Why are they so different?

The Isaiah chapters (2 Nephi 12 - 24):

Chapter 12 has to do with the scattering and regathering of Israel, the Second Coming, and the peace of the Millennium. Why is pride the source of most sin? What distinguishes the proud of our day? What does it mean in Chapter 12 when it says, "...the fear of the Lord shall come upon them"?

In **Chapter 13**, Isaiah predicts the Babylonian captivity. The Babylonians killed many of the Jews, but the best and brightest, they carried into Babylon—As it says in verses 2 and 3: "The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient; The captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counselor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator."

The people who were left behind were the poorest of the poor, the beggars in the street. The person with clothes to wear seemed to be of the ruling class, but he didn't feel that way. When Judea was conquered, their sins were as Sodom. Sodom was famous for certain sins, but one of the main ones was not sexual, but was trodding on the poor (see verse 14). Chapter 13 then goes on to lament the haughtiness of the women. Think about our Instagram influencers of today. Are there messages in this scripture for us? How many of our daughters want to grow up to be "influencers"? What are the qualifications and preparations for this career?

Chapter 14 talks about the Millennium. What will Jerusalem be like then and what will her daughters be like?

Chapter 15 uses the symbolism of a vineyard (Israel) planted by the Lord that has brought forth wild grapes. When Jesus taught in parables, He used this same imagery a lot. The people were familiar with Isaiah and could relate Jesus' teachings to his. Verse 7 summarizes the images used in the first six verses and relates their meanings. The Lord wants to make a point about

how much work He has invested in Israel. Note that verse 2 talks about gathering out stones. Judea is full of stones! It's a huge project to clear them.

Verse 8 is confusing. What does it mean to join house to house? It means to crowd out the poor. Verse 13 condemns the Jews for having no knowledge. What does this mean and how did it lead to their destruction? Verse 20 says, "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Is this happening today? Why was it important to Nephi to include this chapter, which lists the sins of Judah? At the end of the chapter, Isaiah talks about the last days, when Israel will be gathered and redeemed. Good news, but there is a lot of warning in this chapter for the people of Nephi.

In **Chapter 16**, Isaiah describes the experience he had when he saw the Lord. In this chapter, Isaiah uses the first person to quote Christ so it sounds like Isaiah is speaking when it's really the Savior. Isaiah does this often as a poetic device, but also because he really feels Christ's courage as well as His godly sorrow.

In **Chapter 17**, Isaiah foretells the attack of Judah by Syria allied with the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Ephraim). This happened before the Babylonian captivity. The attack was thwarted, but it was devastating for Judah to watch Ephraim ally with her enemies. Messianic imagery begins in verse 14 with the Virgin Birth. In verse 17, Isaiah begins to foretell the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by Assyria.

Chapter 18 begins with a prophecy of the ruination of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria. In verses 9 through 12, Isaiah warns that no political alliance can save them. In contrast, the Nephites had no direct witness of the Babylonian captivity of Judea, because it was about to happen when they fled Jerusalem, but they certainly had stories of the ravage of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was absolutely horrifying because of the brutality of the Assyrians.

Verses 13 and 14 are very interesting: "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." In other words, instead of trying to find hope in a political alliance, you should be relying upon and fearing your God above all.

In the same breath we see the Lord identify Himself as a "stone of stumbling" and a "rock of offense" for both Ephraim and Judah. How do we see evidence of this in both the Old and New Testaments? How is Christ a stone of stumbling and rock of offense for many people today?

The rest of Chapter 18 could be summarized as "looking for salvation in all the wrong places." People are looking to soothsaying and familiar spirits and then when they look around at the earth, all they see is "trouble, and darkness, dimness of anguish." How can we relate these words to our times?

Chapter 19 foretells the coming of Christ and mixes imagery from both His first and Second Coming. You will recognize verse 6 as the source for part of Handel's Messiah, and you might want to [listen to that as a group](#). The message of hope continues to verse 10 and then the tone changes back again to one of warning and coming destruction.

In verses 15 and 16, God condemns wicked leaders and teachers who have corrupted the people. This sort of condemnation appears elsewhere in the Bible repeatedly. What is the responsibility of religious and political leaders and teachers in relation to eternal truth?

Last days imagery is combined at the end of the chapter with the condemnation of Ephraim and Menasseh for turning against Judah.

Chapter 20 talks about the destruction of the Assyrians and likens it to the destruction of the wicked before the Second Coming. [Here's what history says about it:](#)

In 612 B.C. the Median king Cyaxares (reign ca. 625–585 B.C.) launched a major attack on Nineveh, which the Assyrian king Sinsharishkun (reign ca. 622–612 B.C.) tried to stop. A Babylonian inscription said that the fight for Nineveh went on for a few months. "Three battles were fought" in that time, following which the Medians stormed the city itself. The city fell and was destroyed by the Median army who turned the city "into ruin hills and heaps of debris" (translation by CJ Gadd).

The Assyrians fought further battles but their military was gradually drained and their territory destroyed or taken over. It's not clear if Sinsharishkun died at Nineveh or sometime later in a future battle. By 600 B.C. the Assyrian kingdom had been completely destroyed.

Assyria was in the final stages of being completely obliterated when Lehi and his group left Jerusalem. This comparison from Isaiah (whose ministry began around 740 B.C.), came true right in front of their eyes, so this would have been current events for them and right in the forefront of their minds. The chapter starts out with another accusation of those who trample upon the poor. It then regards the pride of the rulers of Assyria, who think they have conquered and gained riches because of their own power and greatness. Verse 20 begins the promise of rededication to the Lord and the regathering of Ephraim and Judah. It's because they stay themselves upon the Lord that they are saved.

Chapter 21 is full of promise. It talks about Christ as the stem of Jesse (who was the father of King David and the ancestor of Christ). For details on the stem, rod, and branch of Jesse, refer to [Section 113 of the Doctrine and Covenants](#). Chapter 21 describes conditions during the Millennium. Before the Millennium, God will physically gather the Jews. Verse 16 refers to the return of the Lost Tribes.

Chapter 22 is like a short psalm of gratitude.

Chapter 23 compares the fall of Babylon to the destruction before the Second Coming of Christ. Remarkably, Babylon's fall was almost instant, not drawn out over months and years. Verse 9 says, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." Verse 10 begins a description of the Second Coming, with the earth removing from her orbit. The imagery then goes back to the ravagement of the Babylonians by the Medes.

God promises the great city of Babylon the following fate: "It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there." This has come to pass.



Ruins of Babylon today

Chapter 24 begins with the promise of regathering. In verses 1 to 11, Isaiah is rejoicing at the fall of Babylon the Great (symbolic of the wickedness of the world). Verse 12 is related in that it refers back to the fall of Lucifer in the pre-existence. He fell then and will fall again. He aspired to greatness just as Babylon did, but will eventually be destroyed.

An interesting note about verse 24. The equivalent is Isaiah 14:29—"Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent." During the first Gulf War at the beginning of 1991, the Israelis had several Bible verses they used to typify the conflict. This is one of them, with Saddam Hussein being the cockatrice, and the fiery flying serpents the missiles he fired at Israel. In fact, the radio stations used the Hebrew term for fiery flying serpent (*nahash sefa*) as the code word for incoming missiles during air raids.

They also used verse 31: "Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou, whole Palestina, art dissolved; for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times." The smoke in the north was from the oil wells the Iraqis set on fire.

Nephi prophesies of the Messiah (2 Nephi 25):

Nephi explains his choice to include some of the words of Isaiah, which were hard for his people to understand. The Nephites understood everything Isaiah said about the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians. They were not there for the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the life of Christ and Second Coming were in the future. What might have been hard for them to understand?

Nephi says in verse 2 that he had not taught his people much about the manner of the Jews, "for their works were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations." His people lived according to the Law of Moses, so that wasn't the problem. What could have been the problem then? Discuss.

In verse 4, Nephi says the words of Isaiah are plain to those with the spirit of prophecy. What does this mean? And in verse 5, Nephi compliments the Jews: "Yea, and my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah, for I came out from Jerusalem, and mine eyes hath beheld the things of the Jews, and I know that the Jews do understand the things of the prophets, and there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews."

So, the Jews understood the prophets like no one else could, and yet they were involved in works of darkness? One possibility for the darkness among the Jews could be Jewish mysticism, which, when carried to extremes, can become sorcery. Another possibility could be the wickedness of Jewish leaders at the time before the Babylonian captivity.

In verse 7, Nephi says we will understand Isaiah as his prophecies come to pass. Looking backwards, we'll understand a great deal of scripture better than we do now. 20-20 hindsight is a real thing.

Nephi testifies that Jerusalem has been destroyed. He prophesies (verse 11) that they will return to Jerusalem. In verse 12, Nephi prophesies that Christ will come and will be rejected by the Jews. They will crucify Him (v. 13) and Christ will rise again. Those who follow Him will be righteous. In verse 14 Nephi says Jerusalem would be destroyed again, and this happened in 70 A.D. at the hand of the Romans. In verse 16, Nephi prophesies that the Jews would be scattered and smitten for many generations, and that has occurred. Nephi prophesies that God would seek to regather them physically and spiritually.

The records the Nephites were keeping would be implemental in bringing the truth to a fallen world in the future (beginning in verse 18). And a favorite verse for many: "And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (verse 26). Nephi explains the reasons why they must keep the Law of Moses, even though only Christ can bring them salvation.