

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 9: "My Soul Delighteth in the Words of Isaiah"

(2 Nephi 11-25)

LESSON GOAL: To inspire us to read the prophecies of Isaiah and to help us understand how these prophecies apply in our lives.

3 Nephi 23:1 "And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah."

from *Unlocking Isaiah* by Victor L. Ludlow: "To better appreciate the value and meaning of Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon, the reader should ask this question: "What can I learn from this Isaiah passage that will help me better understand three essential doctrines?": The doctrines are 1) God's covenants with the house of Israel, 2) prophecies of the last days, and 3) the Savior's calling and mission (17).

FIVE SUGGESTIONS TO HELP IN THIS STUDYING, PONDERING, AND LEARNING FROM THE SCRIPTURES:

- 1) **Place the material in a historical context.** Try to understand not just what was said but also why and in what context.
- 2) **Review the major or important ideas in your mind.** Ask yourself, "What is the Lord saying to us in this Isaiah passage?" Or ask if there is something of personal value to you in this passage. Liken the message unto yourself.
- 3) **Study one small section of the material, just a few verses at a time.** Go back and don't just reread but also study. Try to identify any poetic patterns or parallelisms. Review and ponder how these insights into the Isaiah passage help enrich your understanding of God's word and its application to you.
- 4) **Highlight at least one message or lesson from the passage.** Glean valuable insights and spiritual treasures from the Isaiah passage that will help you with increased faith and commitment.
- 5) Finally, during this whole process, **follow Moroni's important fourfold admonition of how to study the scriptures:** as you *read* the material, *remember* God's words and works, *ponder* these things and how they relate to you, and *pray* with real faith and sincerity to understand them. (Moroni 10:3-5)

Akin to music, **POETRY** in the Book of Mormon speaks to the soul, not just the mind. It partakes of qualities of divine inspiration. Written originally by people familiar with the Hebrew language, it is like that of the Old Testament. Its defining characteristic is **PARALLELISM**. The most basic kinds of parallelism in second lines of Hebrew poetry are explained below. These four kinds of parallelism occur in the "psalm of Nephi" (2 Ne. 4:15-35).

- a. **use of a synonym or synonymous expression:** For my soul delighteth in the scriptures,
and my heart pondereth them (v. 15)
- b. **contrast of an opposing thought:** Behold, he hath heard my cry by day,
and he hath given me knowledge by visions in the night-time (v. 23)
- c. **completion of the thought:** He hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh,
He hath confounded mine enemies unto the causing of them to quake before me
- d. **repetition of the idea in a reverse order, also called chiasmus:** (v. 21-2)
Awake my soul! No longer droop in sin.
Rejoice, O my heart, and give place to more for the enemy of my soul . . .
Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord and say:
O Lord, I will praise thee forever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee, my God and the rock of my salvation (v. 28)

1. Nephi testifies of Isaiah's writings and gives keys for understanding them.

Nephi provided several keys that can help us better understand the writings of Isaiah.

Key 1: "Liken all scriptures unto us" (1 Nephi 19:23; see also 2 Nephi 11:2, 8)

Key 2: "Know ... concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews" he used imagery and symbolism that would have been familiar to Jewish people in his time. (2 Nephi 25:1)

Key 3: "Know the judgments of God" From Isaiah's accounts of what happened to Israel and Judah, we can better understand how God works in our lives and how He blesses nations according to their righteousness. (2 Nephi 25:3,6)

Key 4: "Know concerning the regions round about [Jerusalem]" Knowing the geography and place-names in Israel helps us better understand Isaiah's prophecies concerning the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. (2 Nephi 25:6)

Key 5: Be "filled with the spirit of prophecy" (2 Nephi 25:4).

WHY NEPHI QUOTED ISAIAH

To "more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord"	1 Nephi 19:23
To provide another witness of Jesus Christ	2 Nephi 11:2-4
To help us (his readers) rejoice	2 Nephi 11:5-6, 8
To reveal God's judgments	2 Nephi 25:3

2. Isaiah and Nephi testify of Jesus Christ's redeeming power.

Spencer W. Kimball: "Parents must first teach of Christ. We can see that not all activities we could engage in are of equal weight, even though they may appropriately be a part of a spiritually balanced family unity development program. Some concerns have higher priorities. We remember the words of Nephi as he counseled: 'And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ ... that our children may know to what source they may look.' (2 Nephi 25:26.) **What inner strength would be in every person if he knew that the Master and His teachings were indeed his great source of guidance, his great source of correct example, his great source of help! That is our prime goal in all our teaching in the home"** (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 333).

Gene R. Cook: "It is absolutely essential to apply the scriptures to yourself...[when] we're searching to apply them to our own hearts is when they really come alive...If you really want to come unto the Lord, if you really want to draw close to Him and find out how He is, how He works, how He thinks, what He counts to be important and what He doesn't, you'll find it in the scriptures." (*LDS Church News*, Nov. 19, 1988)

Boyd K. Packer: "The Book of Mormon is a book of scripture. It is another testament of Jesus Christ. It is written in biblical language, the language of the prophets.

For the most part, it is in easy-flowing New Testament language. You will not read many pages into it until you catch the cadence of that language and the narrative will be easy to understand. As a matter of fact, most teenagers readily understand the narrative of the Book of Mormon.

Then, just as you settle in to move comfortably along, you will meet a barrier. The style of the language changes to Old Testament prophecy style. For, interspersed in the narrative are chapters reciting the prophecies of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. They loom as a barrier, like a roadblock or a checkpoint beyond which the casual reader, one with idle curiosity, generally will not go.

You, too, may be tempted to stop there, but do not do it! **Do not stop reading!** Move forward through those difficult-to-understand chapters of Old Testament prophecy, even if you understand very little of it. Move on, if all you do is skim and merely glean an impression here and there. Move on, if all you do is look at the words.

Because you are forewarned about that barrier, you will be able to surmount it and finish reading the book" ("The Things of My Soul," *Ensign*, May 1986).

Mark E. Petersen: "If you really and truly believe in the first and great commandment, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, might, mind and strength, it means then that you will serve him with all your soul, and with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your might, and with all your strength. **That means that you will serve him without reservation of any kind, and that of a truth you will put your whole soul, your whole heart, into the work of Almighty God,** that you will apply the best of your intelligence, you will serve him with all your mind, by seeking to know the program of the Church, and then to live up to that program with all your soul.

"It means likewise if you are going to love him and serve him with all your strength, that you will serve him, with all your physical strength, with all your mental strength, with all your spiritual strength, and with the strength of all your resources, whatsoever they may be. If you really love the Lord your God you will serve him in that manner. And all who do so are likened unto a wise man that built his house upon the rock, and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock" (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1944, 126).

Joseph Fielding Smith: "Revelation may be given to every member of the Church. The Prophet said that every man should be a prophet; that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. **It is not only the privilege but the duty of each member of the Church to know the truth which will make him free.** This he cannot know unless it is revealed to him. Moroni has promised every person who humbly and sincerely reads the Book of Mormon that **he may know by revelation that it is true.** The gift of the Holy Ghost is given to the members of the Church so that they may have the spirit of prophecy and revelation. Let it be understood however, that they will not receive revelation for the guidance of the Church. That gift is reserved for and vested in the man who holds the keys of the Priesthood. **But the members of the Church are entitled to receive revelation which is needful for their progress and if they will hearken to the Spirit of truth and walk humbly before the Lord, they will not fall short of this spiritual guidance"** (*Church History & Modern Revelation*, vol. 4, 36).

The Book of Mormon Will Change Your Life

by Elder Henry B. Eyring Ensign Feb. 2004
(Condensed. Google for complete discourse.)

There are four things I try to do when I teach the scriptures: **read, prove, prepare, and testify**. Let me address each of those one at a time.

Read

Before writing this, I set aside a short period of time to read the Book of Mormon. It changed my life. Suddenly, I saw it as a movie, in full color and on a wide screen. People became more real to me. I pictured the Savior and His visit almost as if I had been there. And **I had a feeling for Nephi, who somehow knew about the change you and I want so much to make in our lives**. If I was going to teach what the change is, I would use Mosiah 27:25–26:

“And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

“And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.”

Now, that is the change. It is not to be a little better. It is not to know a little more. **It is to be born again, to be changed by the power of the Atonement.**

I have worried about the barrier of Isaiah. In fact, I have pondered this thought: **“Why did Nephi put the barrier there?”**

There is a scripture that I used for years in the seminary and institute of religion program in writing curriculum and in designing courses. The verse says:

“And I did read many things unto them which were written in the books of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer **I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning**” (1 Ne. 19:23).

I have thought perhaps what Nephi is trying to tell us is that he recognized the barrier of Isaiah. He knew that the book of Isaiah is full of imagery. Of all the scriptures, few have as many images; therefore, Isaiah can be very difficult. I believe what Nephi meant by “liken all scriptures unto us” was that they could be directly applied.

As you read Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, try to believe that Nephi knew Isaiah and he knew imagery. **Nephi said to liken Isaiah directly unto you. So I tried it.** I read Isaiah’s words again, assuming Nephi picked the parts of Isaiah that I, without worrying about the imagery, could take directly to my heart as if the Lord were speaking to me.

Now I will share with you my own experiment. This is personal; it lets you look into my heart.

I began to read in 2 Nephi 12 and thought: **“The Lord is speaking to me. What is it He wants to tell me directly?”** Then I came to a verse in the Isaiah passages that jumped out as if it were already underlined: “And it shall come to pass that the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day” (2 Ne. 12:11).

This is describing a day when the Savior will come, This scripture says that in that day, **all of us who thought we were special and wonderful will seem smaller, and the Lord will be exalted**. We will see better who He is, how much we love Him, and how humble we should be. . . **I believed that Isaiah was talking to me directly, not in imagery.**

I understood why Isaiah told me it would be helpful to foresee the day when the Lord would be exalted and to know how much I depend upon Him. **We need Him, and the faith we have in Him makes us see Him as great and exalted and ourselves as small and dependent**. As great as the brother of Jared was, he saw himself as we need to see ourselves if we are to have the Atonement work in our lives.

Prove

The second thing all of us teachers think about, pray about, and work at is “to prove.” You want to prove the gospel of Jesus Christ. You want your students to know it is true.

You want your students to see that their challenge is not to prove that the Book of Mormon is true but to prove to God that they—the students—are true. . . . I bear testimony that however much you have learned from the Book of Mormon before, you should read it again and prove it. **Prove it by proving yourself. Do the things you feel impressed to do, and you will find things in it that you have never seen before.**

Prepare

The next step a teacher takes is to prepare. **I pray that all of you might prepare through fasting and prayer and testimony.**

Testify

You need to testify. The last testimony in the Book of Mormon was put at the end for a purpose: **“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.** “And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot” (Moro. 10:32–33).

AN OUTLINE OF 2 NEPHI 12-24 (ISAIAH 2-14)

2 Nephi 12 (Isaiah 2)

1. Introduction
- 2-3. The Lord's house in the last days
4. Millennial peace
- 5-9. The Lord's complains against the idolatry of Israel
- 10-18. The Lord's judgment against the proud and those who worship the work of men's hands
- 19-21. The idol worshipers fear the Lord's judgment
22. Stop trusting in man

2 Nephi 13 (Isaiah 3)

- 1-7. Chaos will come upon Judah
- 8-9. Judah revels in sin
10. It will be well with the righteous
- 11-12. Disaster will come upon the wicked
- 13-15. The Lord's judgment
- 16-26. Condemnation and judgment on Zion's women

2 Nephi 14 (Isaiah 4)

1. Condemnation and judgment on Zion's women (con't)
- 2-6. Millennial restoration, cleansing and glory

2 Nephi 15 (Isaiah 5)

- 1-2. The Lord prepared a vineyard, which brought forth bad fruit
- 3-4. The Lord's complaint against his vineyard
- 5-6. The vineyard's punishment
7. Israel and Judah are the Lord's vineyard
- 8-10. Destruction of cities and farms foretold
- 11-25b. Condemnation of drunkards, the proud, and the wicked
- 25c-30. Invasion, capture, and destruction by foreign nations

2 Nephi 16 (Isaiah 6)

- 1-4. Isaiah's glorious vision of the Lord in His temple
- 5-7. Isaiah's cleansing
- 8-13. Isaiah's commission to preach

2 Nephi 17 (Isaiah 7)

- 1-6. King Ahaz (of Judah) commanded not to fear invasion by Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria
- 7-9. The invasion will not succeed: Israel and Syria will fall
- 10-16. The sign of Immanuel given to Ahaz: Judah will be delivered
- 17-20. The coming invasion by the Assyrians
- 21-25. The emptiness of the land after the coming of the Assyrians

2 Nephi 18 (Isaiah 8)

- 1-4. The sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz given; Judah will be delivered
- 5-8. Judah will be overpowered by Assyria
- 9-10. Since God is in control, armaments and strategies will be useless
- 11-15. The Lord is a sanctuary to those who revere him, but a stumbling block and a snare to the wicked
- 16-22. Seek revelation from the Lord

2 Nephi 19 (Isaiah 9)

- 1-7. The Messiah's coming brings justice, righteousness, and peace
- 8-21. The Lord's anger and judgment against Israel

2 Nephi 20 (Isaiah 10)

- 1-4. God's anger against the unjust
- 5-19. God's judgment on the arrogance of Assyria
- 20-23. A remnant will return to the Lord
- 24-34. Zion's deliverance from the power of Assyria

2 Nephi 21 (Isaiah 11)

- 1-5. The rod and stem of Jesse
- 6-9. Millennial peace
- 10-13. The root of Jesse, an ensign for the gathering of Israel, Judah, and the Gentiles
- 14-16. The defeat of the nations

2 Nephi 22 (Isaiah 12)

- 1-6. A hymn of praise to the Lord

2 Nephi 23 (Isaiah 13)

1. Introduction: A prophecy of doom against Babylon
- 2-5. The Lord summons the nations to come against Babylon
- 6-13. Destruction on the day of the Lord
- 14-22. The destruction of Babylon

2 Nephi 24 (Isaiah 14)

- 1-2. The restoration of Israel
- 3-23. A taunting prophecy against Babylon and her king
- 24-27. A prophecy of doom against Assyria
- 28-31. A prophecy of doom against the Phillistines
32. Refuge will be in Zion

SOME REFERENCES TO ISAIAH IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

<u>Book of Mormon</u>	<u>Isaiah</u>
2 Nephi 6:6-7	Isaiah 49:22-23
2 Nephi 6:16	Isaiah 49:24
2 Nephi 6:17	Isaiah 49:25
2 Nephi 6:18	Isaiah 49:26
2 Nephi 7:1-11	Isaiah 50:1-11
2 Nephi 8:1-23	Isaiah 51:1-23
2 Nephi 9:50	Isaiah 55:1
2 Nephi 9:51	Isaiah 55:2
2 Nephi 12	Isaiah 2
2 Nephi 13	Isaiah 3
2 Nephi 14	Isaiah 4
2 Nephi 15	Isaiah 5
2 Nephi 16	Isaiah 6
2 Nephi 17	Isaiah 7
2 Nephi 18	Isaiah 8
2 Nephi 19	Isaiah 9
2 Nephi 20	Isaiah 10
2 Nephi 21	Isaiah 11
2 Nephi 22	Isaiah 12
2 Nephi 23	Isaiah 13
2 Nephi 24	Isaiah 14