

I Will Make all My Mountains a Way

*Isaiah's vision of God's plan to fulfill
His covenant with the House of Israel*

By Michael L. King

As the house of Israel was in the midst of destruction and dispersion, the Lord promised through his prophet Isaiah that in an "acceptable time", He would hear them and "in a day of salvation" help them and preserve them, give them for a covenant, and cause them to "inherit the desolate heritages". The Lord promised them, "I will make all my mountains a way and my highways shall be exalted" (Isaiah 49:8, 11). The "mountains" of the Lord would provide "a way" for all of Israel to one day receive the covenant.

Having seen many of their people die, however, the house of Israel could not understand how they could still receive the promised blessings and lamented, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me" (Isaiah 49:14). To those who did not understand the Lord's plan, the fact that the house of Israel died without receiving the promised blessings was evidence that God had forgotten His covenant and forsaken His people. Similarly, many who destroyed the Nephites, a remnant of the house of Israel, believed that they had destroyed "the work of the Lord and the Lord will not remember his covenant". As a witness of the destruction, but being one who understood the covenant, Moroni boldly declared, "the eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled. Search the prophecies of Isaiah" (Mormon 8:21-23). Moroni saw in the writings of Isaiah the Lord's plan to keep his covenant with a people that had been defeated and

destroyed. Nephi, Jacob, and the Savior also used the writings of Isaiah to explain God's intent to fulfill his covenant with the house of Israel.

THE MESSAGE OF ISAIAH

Many, if not all students of the scriptures find Isaiah difficult to understand. This is due in part to the fact that Isaiah intimately interweaves details from his own time with his prophecies of the Latter-days, as well as the time of the Savior. Like a master weaver of fabric, Isaiah uses a multitude of threads that combine to form the final tapestry. The threads are so tightly woven that it becomes difficult to separate each individual thread. This is especially true in relation to the fulfilling of the covenant with the house of Israel. While telling of the destruction that was coming to the house of Israel, Isaiah blends the imagery of the tabernacle from his day, the mortal and post mortal mission of Christ, the restoration of the gospel, the temples of the latter-days, and the millennial day to reveal the Lord's plan for restoring the children of Israel to the covenant. Isaiah blends these ideas over and over, going back and forth in both time and event, leaving it for the reader to engage himself more in the finished tapestry rather than looking for each individual thread.

In studying Isaiah and the commentary provided by Book of Mormon prophets, it appears that five main threads are instrumental in the Lord's plan to fulfill His covenant. **First**, many of the house of Israel will die before receiving the covenant; **second**, Christ must come and open the way for all men to be taught the gospel and enter into the presence of God; **third**, the gentiles of the latter-days will receive the gospel and be instrumental in helping ancient Israel to receive the

covenant, *fourth*, "mountains" will provide a way whereby all, including the dead, may be brought forth to receive the covenant; and *finally*, a millennial period of peace will come when Christ shall reign upon the earth and temple work will accelerate to bring every person who ever lived the opportunity to accept and receive the blessings of gospel covenants. While most Latter-day Saints are familiar with God's covenant with Israel, a brief summary may be helpful before looking at Isaiah's prophecies regarding its fulfillment.

THE COVENANT

Since the fall of Adam, the prophets and patriarchs have been promised that they and their future posterity would one day return to the presence of God. Abraham, a man who "sought for the blessings of the fathers" (Abraham 1:2-4), received a renewal of this promise, which became known as the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:7-9).

The Lord's promises to Abraham can be loosely summarized into three main ideas, captured in the letters LDS, representing **L**and, **D**eliverance (through Christ and God's priesthood), and **S**eed (Gen.17: 5-9; Abraham 2:6-11). God promised that Abraham would have countless seed, a place to raise that seed, and the power through a deliverer to lift his seed from the corruption of a telestial world. Though faithful and righteous, neither Abraham nor successive prophets saw the fulfillment of the covenant during their lifetime. Speaking of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Apostle Paul wrote,

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and

confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Hebrews 11:10-16).

The seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, known as the house of Israel, sojourned from one land to another in search of the promised blessings, but because of disobedience to God, they were continually scattered and destroyed. It was during a time of dispersion and destruction among the house of Israel that Isaiah was called to prophesy. Watching the fall and scattering of the house of Israel, Isaiah was keenly aware of the need to provide hope to Israel that God's promises would be fulfilled, though many of their people would die without having received the blessings.

THERE SHALT THOU DIE

From the beginning of his writings, Isaiah makes it clear that he understands the fallen condition of the children of Israel. He speaks of a people who have forgotten and forsaken the Lord. They are sick, fainted, and full of wounds, bruises, and sores. He speaks of their desolate country that has been burned, devoured, and overthrown by strangers (Isaiah 1:2-7). He tells them that in that day, the Lord will make a "call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth" (Isaiah 22:12). Israel will not listen but will say, "eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die" (v.13). So, the Lord tells Israel, "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die," (v. 14). Isaiah is commanded to tell Israel that "the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity ... will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die" (Isaiah 22:17-18). Later Isaiah calls Israel, "a people robbed and spoiled" and "hid in prison houses", because

"they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law" (Isaiah 42:22-24). Isaiah makes it clear that the children of the house of Israel were to die and be shut up in prison.

A SAVIOR, REDEEMER, AND HIGH PRIEST

While dead and in prison, the Lord does not leave Israel without hope. Isaiah prophesied that after the "prisoners are gathered in the pit and shall be shut up in the prison, ... after many days shall they be visited" (Isaiah 24:22). When they are visited, the Lord says that he "will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people", "that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves" (Isaiah 49:8-9). Isaiah repeatedly promises Israel that the Lord will be their savior and redeemer (see Isaiah 43), and "He will swallow up death in victory" and "will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isaiah 25:8). "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise, Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust" (Isaiah 26:19). "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem.... Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.... Ye have sold yourselves for naught; and ye shall be redeemed without money"(Isaiah 52:1-3, including footnote 2b). The Lord further promises Israel, "the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished" (Isaiah 51:6-11). Christ's covenant to provide salvation for Israel was to

go beyond the veil and take place "in an acceptable time ... and in a day of salvation ... That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth" (Isaiah 49:8-9).

Through the ages of the earth, the percentage of God's children that have heard Christ's teachings during their mortal probation has been relatively small. Until the dead have an opportunity to hear the gospel and receive eternal life, the plan is not acceptable to God, for he takes no "pleasure at all that the wicked should die" (Ezekiel 18:23, 30-32).

Providing redemption for the dead was to be one of the Savior's key roles as the Messiah. President Joseph F. Smith, in his marvelous vision concerning the redemption of the dead, recognized that Isaiah was referring to the Savior's role in the work for the dead when Isaiah stated, "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 were bound" (Isaiah 61:1; D&C 138:42). Using these four statements of Isaiah as a helpful template, we can see Christ's role in fulfilling the covenant with the house of Israel in four ways. First, binding up the brokenhearted may be compared to Christ's atonement for the sins of those who have a "broken heart and contrite spirit" (endnote 1). Second, Christ opened the prison to them that are bound by opening the way for the preaching of the gospel to the spirits who were in prison (endnote 2). Third, through His resurrection, Christ proclaimed liberty to all those captive to death and hell (endnote 3). Fourth, the Savior preaches the good tidings that

celestial exaltation has been made possible by Him who was given the priestly mantle to part the veil and allow all to enter celestial glory (endnote 4).

In order to illustrate Christ's role in opening the way into the celestial presence of God, Isaiah draws upon the imagery of the ancient tabernacle. Isaiah tells us that Christ would be similar to that of the high priest in Israel, being "clothed" with the "robe" and the "girdle" (Isaiah 22:21; see also Isaiah 22:20, footnote a), as the priest was clothed anciently (Leviticus 8:7). He would be given the government in his hand that he might be a "father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." The government of a father is known as a patriarchal order which shall be in the hand of the Messiah. Christ would also be given the "key of the house of David" and it would be laid "upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut" (Isaiah 22:21-22, endnote 5). Isaiah then blends this tabernacle imagery with a powerful scene from the Savior's ministry telling us that Christ would be fastened "as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house" (Isaiah 22:23-25).

A second witness to Isaiah's imagery of Christ as the high priest is found in the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews. As one of the great temple texts of ancient scripture, the book of Hebrews sheds additional light on "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1). Christ could enter into the holy of holies, "being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle ... neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the Holy place" (Hebrews 9:11-12; see also Hebrews 5:1-6;

7:15-17). Prior to the time of Christ, only the high priest of Israel was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement (Hebrews 9:7-12; Endnote 6). To ancient Israel, the Holy of Holies represented the dwelling place of God and the fullness of his glory into which they could not enter. The high priest had to perform the ordinances on their behalf. As both great high priest and the sacrificial lamb, however, Christ opened the way so that all men could enter "with boldness ... into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:12-22; see also Hebrews 4: 14-16). Christ administered the ordinances necessary to allow entrance into the Holy of Holies, not for himself alone, but also "having obtained eternal redemption for us" as well (Hebrew 9:12).

In the garden, Christ offered "the high priestly prayer" (Endnote 7) on behalf of all His brothers and sisters. Praying three times and bleeding from every pore, Christ becomes the fulfillment of the Lamb of the Passover, in which the Israelites were commanded to "take of the blood and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the house" (See Exodus 12:7; Endnote 8). Then through His crucifixion, He offered himself as the great and last sacrifice so that all might enter the Holy of Holies. At Christ's death, the "veil of the temple was rent" (Matthew 27:51), thus symbolizing that the way was now open for all men to enter into the presence of God.

Christ made it possible for all mankind to be taught the gospel, to be forgiven of sin, to be resurrected, and to be brought back into the presence of God through the ordinances of godliness. A way now had to be provided whereby all the children

of God would be able to receive and accept the covenants that gives access to the full blessings of Christ's atonement and enter into the presence of the Lord.

GENTILES SET UP FOR A STANDARD

Isaiah tells us that the Lord will "lift up [his] hand to the gentiles, and set up [his] standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders" (Isaiah 49:22). When questioned by his brothers concerning these verses, Nephi explained that after Israel was "scattered and confounded", the Lord "would raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles" and "set them up for a standard". God would "proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles", which would be of worth not only to the Gentiles, but also "unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father in Heaven unto Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (1 Nephi 22:1-12). Isaiah tells us that this marvelous work would take place when "the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed" which shall "speak out of the ground" (Isaiah 29:4-14).

The coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the gospel in the latter-days marked the beginning of the marvelous work to restore Israel to the covenant and give all men the chance to feast at the table of the Lord. Isaiah prophesied that it was to be "in this mountain" that the Lord would "make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees". He would also "destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations". He would "swallow up death in victory" and "wipe away

tears from off all faces ... for in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest" (Isaiah 25:6-10). The Lord told the saints of the Latter-days that it was their honor to prepare this feast for all to come and partake. It was to be the "supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited" (D&C 58:7-13).

The feast or supper of the Lord's house could not be served until a house of the Lord, or mountain, was built. Before temples could be brought forth upon the earth, however, the people had to be gathered. Both a spiritual gathering and a physical gathering had to occur before the work of the temple could proceed. Ezekiel spoke of this gathering that had to occur before "dry bones" could live (See Ezekiel 36 &37), and Isaiah states that Israel must be gathered before she can "shake [herself] from the dust" (See Isaiah 51 &52). In the latter days, Joseph Smith taught,

What was the object of gathering the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world? ... The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of his kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose. It was the design of the councils of heaven before the world was, that the principles and laws of the priesthood should be predicated upon gathering of the people in every age of the world ... It is for the same purpose that God gathers together His people in the last days, to build unto the Lord a house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and annointings, etc. (Endnote 9)

The gathering for the purpose of building temples is compared in both ancient and modern scripture to the spreading of a tent. Isaiah used this imagery to describe Zion and the establishment of the tabernacle (Isaiah 33:20). Isaiah told Israel to "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtain of thine

habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes" (Isaiah 54:2). In the latter-days, the Lord told the saints to "Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations; and thy gathering upon the land of Zion and upon her stakes, may be for a defense". Zion was to be called "most holy ground", a place to "build a house unto me, for the gathering together of my saints, that they may worship me" (D&C 115:5-8).

Using an analogy of circus workers raising the "Big top" may help to understand the raising of Zion. Before the center pole can be raised, the canvass must be spread to its full capacity. The ropes or cords are drawn out to their full length, and then stakes are driven to hold the tent in place. After enough stakes have been placed, the center pole is raised, and the stakes are driven in further to keep the canvass tight and secure. Additional stakes follow until the tent is standing firm.

Similarly, in the building of temples, the gospel must first be spread out to its full capacity and reach to the four quarters of the earth. Stakes are established in an area to help the members stay firm in the faith and enjoy a measure of the gospel blessings. When enough stakes are established, the center point, or the temple, is raised to complete the work of gathering all to Zion. The Lord referred to Zion as a "center place" where a temple would be erected (D&C 57:1-3). The living must be physically brought together so that enough stakes can be laid so that the center point can be raised. There must also be a spiritual gathering in order to bring people to an understanding of the covenant and a desire for the "promises made to the

fathers" (See Malachi 4:5-6 and Abraham 1:1-4). The Lord specifically mentions the need to gather so that the Saints could be endowed with power from on high (See D&C 38:31-33). A great preparatory work had to occur before the first temples of the last dispensation could be built.

The long wait between the Savior's mission among the living and the dead and the establishment of temples to provide "a way" for the dead to be redeemed left many wondering if God had forgotten His covenant with the house of Israel (See Isaiah 64:6-12). "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me". But the Lord replies, "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" (Isaiah 49:14-16). The marks in the Savior's palms are tokens that he will never forget the children of his covenant people. Though "for a small moment have I forsaken thee," the Lord also declares, "but with great mercies will I gather thee" (Isaiah 54:7-8). He goes on to promise Israel that "thy children" will "gather themselves together" and He will "clothe" them, and "bind them on thee like a bride" (Isaiah 49:18, Endnote 10).

The restored children of Israel will be so numerous that the "desolate places and the land of thy destruction shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants" (Isaiah 49:19). Elder Orson F. Whitney taught,

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared – and he never taught a more comforting doctrine – that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may

wander, the eye of the shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God."
(Endnote 11)

This promise to remember and save their children will leave Israel to exclaim, "Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who hath brought up these? Behold I was left alone; these, where had they been" (Isaiah 49:18, 21)? Through Isaiah, the Lord teaches Israel that He would use the gentiles to build temples to accomplish his work to bring back Israel's lost children to the covenant.

I SHALL MAKE ALL MY MOUNTAINS A WAY

The Lord tells Israel, "I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted" (Isaiah 49:11), and promises, "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer" (Isaiah 56:7). Isaiah tells Israel, "ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.... And shall worship the Lord in the holy mount" (Isaiah 27:12-13). Isaiah paints the image of mountains as the place for a joyful return of Israel to their God. He prophesies, "in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains" and that "all nations shall flow unto it.". It is here that "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" (Isaiah 2:2-3).

Prophets and righteous men from the beginning have been called to mountains to meet with God and receive instructions from Him. Enoch was called to go up to mount Simeon (Hebrew - hearing) to "hear" God's word and to be "clothed" upon with glory (Moses 7:2-3). The brother of Jared went up to mount Shelem where the veil was parted, and he saw God (Ether 3). The Lord told Moses when he stood upon the mountain, "put off thy shoes from off they feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5). Moses was called up to a mountain on several occasions and was clothed with the glory of God and received instructions regarding the creation, fall, and salvation of the world (Moses 1-4). It was to a mountain that Christ took Peter, James, and John during his mortal ministry that they might be endowed with the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 17:1-9; Endnote 12).

As mountains have served as a meeting place between God and man throughout history, ancient tabernacles and latter-day temples have been built to provide a "man-made mountain" where man and deity may meet (See D&C 97:12-16). They are designed in both architecture and imagery to lift one's thoughts toward God. Much of the imagery used by Isaiah reflects an intimate understanding of the ceremony and symbolism of the tabernacle as well as latter-day temples. Isaiah uses this understanding to teach the ordinances of the temple that are necessary so that God may fulfill his covenant with the house of Israel and provide them a way to return to him.

At the beginning of his ministry, Isaiah was taken to the temple where he met the Lord and received his commission to go and teach the people (Isaiah 6:1-8). He "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne" surrounded by seraphim (or cherubim, see vs. 2 footnote a). As "the posts of the door moved" (v. 4), Isaiah became self-conscious and felt unworthy to enter where the Lord was. Isaiah no doubt had an understanding of the tabernacle and knew that only the high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies and then only on the Day of Atonement. As the high priest approached to make entrance to the Holy of Holies, he encountered the veil, on which were embroidered cherubim which symbolized sentinels to guard the way into the presence of God (Endnote 13). To enter, the priests would strike the posts with blood from an animal that had been slain as atonement for the sins of the people (Endnote 14). Perhaps this was what Isaiah was witnessing as he described the posts of the door moving. He realized that he was being invited to enter the presence of the Lord. It is no wonder that he would exclaim, "Woe is me! For I am undone; ... for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

Isaiah is symbolically cleansed when one of the angels takes a coal from the altar of sacrifice and places it upon Isaiah's mouth. As the altar of sacrifice was a symbol of Jesus' sacrifice, Isaiah is told, "thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged" (Isaiah 6:7). Having been cleansed by the atonement, Isaiah is now prepared to go forth into the presence of the Lord. Similarly, those who come to the covenant of Israel must first be cleansed through the atonement of Christ representing the first step leading back into the presence of God.

Isaiah shows another step in the path back to God in stating that those who are called the house of Israel are those who have "come forth out of the waters of Judah, or out of the waters of baptism" (Isaiah 48:1; 1 Nephi 20:1). Baptism provides a necessary step for all those who desire to return to the presence of God (See 2 Nephi 31:4-18; D&C 128:13-18).

Once cleansed by the atonement and entering the covenant through baptism, the covenant people are "called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name" (Isaiah 62:2; Revelation 2:17; D&C 130:10-11). This new name will be given to those who "take hold of my covenant" and they shall receive "in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name" (Isaiah 56:5). The word "place" is derived from the Hebrew word "yad", which is more commonly translated "hand" (Endnote 15).

Those who accept this hand and name in the house of the Lord shall be "named the Priests of the Lord", and shall be "joyful in God; for he hath clothed [them] with the garments of salvation, he hath covered [them] with the robes of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:7, 10). The Lord calls these his "sanctified ones" and commands them to "Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice to them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles" (Isaiah 13:2-4). They are to "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people" (Isaiah 62:10). Symbolically, it is through the gates of the nobles that one must pass in order to enter into the presence of God. Those who have thus

entered must in turn help others to enter through the gates and lift up a standard for others to follow.

THE GREAT MILLENNIAL DAY

Following his prophecy regarding the establishment of the "mountain of the Lord's house" being "established in the top of the mountains," Isaiah speaks of a day when the people shall "beat their swords into plowshares, and the spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4). Isaiah prophesies that when Christ comes to reign upon the earth, "righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:5-6). This millennial day of the Lord will be a time when all the world will praise God for turning away his anger and bringing salvation to all who desire to come and "draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:1-3).

In that day, shall Israel awake, put on her strength and her beautiful garments. They shall shake themselves from the dust and shall rise to receive those covenant promises and blessings which have been performed for them in the house of the Lord, so that they may sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They will finally be released from the prison that held them bound and will no longer be captive to death and hell (see Isaiah 52:1-2; Alma 7:25; 2 Nephi 9:12). This will be a time when the people shall know His name and will sing and rejoice over the redemption which Christ has provided for them (see Isaiah 52:6-10). After having

passed through many tribulations from the Lord to humble them, in the millennial day, the Lord will "create a new heavens and a new earth" where Jerusalem will have joy and rejoicing, and shall weep no more. Life will be full and sustained until we are "a hundred years old" and live to enjoy the fruits of our labor. We shall not labor in vain, for we shall be among the seed of the Lord and he will answer our prayers before we even call (Isaiah 65:17-25). Tears shall be wiped away from off all faces and all will rejoice and worship the Lord for his wisdom and mercy in providing a means for all the families of the earth to be united (see Isaiah 25:6-10).

THE LATTER-DAY WORK

All the multitudes of God's children have anxiously awaited the day when temple work would be restored in its fullness so that the dead, as well as the living, could receive the covenants made available through Christ's ministry. From the first visit of Moroni to the prophet Joseph, the Lord pointed to the time when temple work could begin. On a September evening in 1823, Moroni quoted to the boy prophet the words of Malachi, who testified that Elijah would reveal the priesthood so that the "promises that were made to the fathers" would be planted in the hearts of the children (JS-H 1:30-39). Elder John A Widtsoe stated,

It is sufficient for us to remember that temple work for the living and for the dead was the burden of the thought and labors of the Prophet Joseph Smith from the day when the Angel Moroni first stood before him and told him of the things that were to be up to the last day of the Prophet's life. (Endnote16)

The sealing keys of Elijah, along with other priesthood keys, were finally restored to the earth in April of 1836 following the dedication of the Kirtland Temple (D&C 110:13-16). Kirtland, however, was only a preparatory temple and the work

for the dead could not begin in earnest. In 1838, the Lord told Joseph Smith, "There is no a place found on the earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood". The Lord asked the saints if the ordinances of baptism for the dead, washings, anointings, and endowments could be acceptable, "except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name", and then commands the saints, "Let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people" (D&C 124:28-40).

Joseph Smith told the saints that the "great and grand secret" and the "*summum bonum*" of the whole matter was in obtaining the powers of the priesthood so that the ordinances and covenants of the Lord could be extended to all people, living and dead (D&C 128:11-15). He pleaded with the Latter-day saints, "Let us, therefore, as a church and as a people and as Latter-day saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in [God's] holy temples, ... a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance" (D&C 128:24; Endnote 17).

The fully acceptable day of the Lord has come at last in the final days of the earth. Temples are being built on every continent and beginning to go to every nation. With the revelation regarding the priesthood, President Kimball stated, "... the long promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows there from, including the blessings of

the temple" (Official Declaration - 2). All peoples from all times and nations can now have access to the covenants of the temple and enter into the "holy place" which was made possible through the Great High Priest. Speaking of the latter-day temples, President James E. Faust stated, "The acceleration of temple building in our time has been marvelous.... All of these exquisite holy edifices are a testimony of our belief that the Savior broke the bonds of death and opened up the way for us to enter into covenants which will be binding in another world" (Endnote 18).

In order for the Lord's covenant to be fulfilled with the house of Israel, the temple work must be done for all those who have died without the opportunity to receive these covenants for themselves. Elder Widtsoe stated,

To understand the meaning of temple worship, it is necessary to understand the plan of salvation.... God's work with respect to this earth will not be complete until every soul has been taught the gospel and has been offered the privilege of accepting salvation and the accompanying great blessings which the Lord has in store for his children. Until that is done the work is unfinished. (Endnote 19)

With so much work to be done, the prophets of the last days continually invite the saints to increase their temple attendance. President Howard W. Hunter urged,

I also invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants.... Let us be a temple-attending and a temple-loving people. Let us hasten to the temple as frequently as time and means and personal circumstances allow. Let us go not only for our kindred dead, but let us also go for the personal blessing of temple worship, for the sanctity and safety which is provided within those hallowed and consecrated walls. The temple is a place of beauty, it is a place of revelation, it is a place of peace. It is the house of the Lord. It is holy unto the Lord. It should be holy unto us" (Endnote 20).

Recognizing that Isaiah was dualistic in most of his writing, perhaps he was not only referring to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, but also to the prolific temple building among the latter-day saints when he prophesied to Israel, "sons of strangers shall build up thy walls.... thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night" (Isaiah 60:10-11). Some temples currently sponsor "fill the temple" days when sessions are conducted around the clock. President Spencer W. Kimball taught,

I can envision not only many more temples, as the Lord directs us when and where to build them, but I foresee the day when we will make around the clock use of all the sacred, holy edifices. I repeat a statement made at the dedication of the temple in Washington 'The day is coming and not too far ahead for us when all temples on this earth will be going day and night.' (Endnote 21)

This "around the clock" usage of temples would certainly fulfill Isaiah's prophecies, including his statement that the Lord would provide "a way" in which he will be able to fulfill his covenants with all the house of Israel to be united with the families in the eternities.

CONCLUSION

When the day comes that all of God's children have been given the opportunity to hear and receive the gospel and the ordinances of exaltation, then is the day that God has fulfilled His promises to the house of Israel. Surely it was this day Isaiah saw when he proclaimed, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, the publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth" (Isaiah 52:7-9). In that day, Zion will "Awake, awake; ... put on thy beautiful garments ...

Shake thyself from dust; arise and sit down" (Isaiah 52:1-2) with all the holy fathers. The dead bones seen by Ezekiel, which are "the whole house of Israel", will live and be clothed upon, not only with "flesh and sinew" (See Ezekiel 37:1-14 and 2 Corinthians 5), but also with the "garments of salvation" and the "robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10) in the temple. In that day, all the House of Israel will know that God keeps His covenants, and all His promises are fulfilled.

ENDNOTES

Endnote 1: *Binding up the Brokenhearted - atoning for sins of the repentant*
 Isaiah taught regarding the Savior, "he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows ... 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" (Isaiah 53:3-5). In order to provide redemption for the dead, Christ had to first pay the price of sin whereby all mankind, living and dead, could be made clean from sin through his atoning blood and the mighty change of heart that comes through repentance. The Savior promised "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15). Isaiah tells us, "...he was their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted ... in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them" (Isaiah 63:9-10). Lehi tells us that it is "unto all those who have a broken heart" that the "ends of the law" are answered (2 Nephi 2:7). To the Nephites the Savior said that they must offer "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" in order to receive redemption from the world of sin (3 Nephi 9:20-21). It is the brokenhearted who will have the wounds of their soul bound up through the healing balm of the Savior's atonement.

Endnote 2: *Opening the prison to them that are bound - preaching the gospel in the spirit world*
 Following his redeeming act of love in the garden and on the cross, the spirit of Jesus did not go back to the Father, but instead went into the world of spirits in order to continue fulfilling his mission as the savior of all mankind (1 Peter 3:18-20; 4:6; D&C 138:11-29). At his death, Jesus told the thief on the cross, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). As the prophet Joseph Smith pointed out, the Savior was not referring to the presence of God, but to the world of spirits (HC 5: 424-25; LDS Bible Dictionary, *Paradise*). At his resurrection, Christ told Mary, "I have not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). It is during this intervening time between death and resurrection that the Lord went to open the prison to those that were bound. His personal work among the living having come to an end,

Christ's work in the spirit world was just beginning. Isaiah prophesied that the prisoners who were shut up in prison would be visited after many days (Isaiah 24:22). Prior to the Savior's visit to the spirit world, the work of preaching the gospel to those that were in prison could not begin, though he himself would not go among those in prison (See LDS Bible Dictionary, *Temple*). While in the world of spirits, Christ "organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead" (D&C 138:30).

Endnote 3: *Proclaim liberty to the captives - providing resurrection of the dead*
The Lord declared, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? ...Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children" (Isaiah 49:24-26). What is mightier than death, which has taken captive all that are subject to the fall? Jacob, the brother of Nephi, used these verses along with the following two chapters from Isaiah in order to clarify the doctrine of resurrection. Jacob taught, "death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel" (See 2 Nephi 9:12; see also 2 Nephi 6 - 8). Through his resurrection from the dead, the Savior set the captives free from death and hell and made the way possible for men to return to God. Without a body, the spirits of men were truly captive and could not return to the presence of God. Heber C. Kimball states that no man will enter into the presence of God without a body (Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:112-13). Perhaps this is why the dead look "upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage" (D&C 45:17; D&C 138:50).

Endnote 4: *Preaching good tidings unto the meek - parting the veil into exaltation*
If the meek are to inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5; D&C 88:17-19; D&C 130:7-9), then the good tidings to the meek would be that the way had been opened for them to dwell on a celestial earth in the presence of God, as a god.

Endnote 5: The language here is similar to the language of Matthew 16:19 where the keys of kingdom are given to bind on earth and in heaven, referring to the sealing keys.

Endnote 6: See *Fasts*, LDS Bible Dictionary

Endnote 7: Farrar, Frederic William, *Life of Christ*, p 580

Endnote 8: *Old Testament Student Manual*, 176-177.

Endnote 9: Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church*, 5:423-424

Endnote 10: The gathering of Israel is symbolized in the baptismal font of Temples. The font is placed on the back of 12 oxen, with four facing each of the directions of the compass; N, S, E, & W (see 1 Kings 7:23-25). The number 12 represents both the tribes of the house of Israel and also priesthood power (see biblestudy.org: 12 as a symbol of priesthood authority). The oxen are a symbol specifically for the tribe of Ephraim, whose responsibility it is to gather Israel through the covenant of baptism. To be clothed is a symbol for being endowed with power from on high (see Moses 7:3-4; Isaiah 61:10). Also referring to our children, Isaiah says that the Lord will "bind them on thee as a bride." This binding is also known as the sealing power given to "bind" families forever. Thus, Isaiah is teaching that in the mountain of the Lord's house, we are to perform baptisms, endowments, and sealings in order to have our families restored together in the eternities.

Endnote 11: Orson F. Whitney, *Conference Report*, April 1929, 110.

Endnote 12: Smith, Joseph Fielding, *Doctrines of Salvation* 2:170; "Now under these conditions, when there is no house of the Lord and the work is urgent, the Lord makes it possible that not only baptism for the dead but also the ordinances that pertain to the house of the Lord may be performed in the wilderness, on mountain top, or in a lake or a stream of water. I am convinced in my own mind that when the Savior took the three disciples up on the mount which is spoken of as the "Mount of Transfiguration," he there gave unto them the ordinances that pertain to the house of the Lord and that they were endowed. That was the only place they could go. That place became holy and sacred for the rites of salvation which were performed on that occasion."

Endnote 13: Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 2:31; Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.

Endnote 14: *Old Testament Student Manual*, 176-177

Endnote 15: *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, pg. 47, and ref. 3027

Endnote 16: John A. Widtsoe, *Fundamentals of Temple Doctrine*, p 129, address delivered at the *Liberty Stake Genealogical Convention*, May 24, 1922

Endnote 17: Noting the language used by the prophet Joseph, it would appear that the work of the dead which is done in temples is at least a partial fulfillment of the prophesy made by John the Baptist at the time of the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood that the "sons of Levi would offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness" (D&C 13).

Endnote 18: James E. Faust, *Ensign*, November 2000, 53

Endnote 19: John A. Widtsoe, quoted in *Savior's on Mount Zion*, by Bennett, Archibald F., p 163

Endnote 20: Howard W. Hunter, *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5

Endnote 21: Spencer W. Kimball, *Temples – Now and in the Future*, 4-5