

# CHAPTER 11

## 2 Nephi 17–24

### Introduction

Understanding the writings of Isaiah quoted by Nephi requires diligent study and effort on your part. Use the commentary and your understanding of the gospel to apply the prophecies and visions of Isaiah concerning the last days preceding the Second Coming. Look for how the birth of Jesus Christ, His life and mission, and the destructions and judgments that will befall the wicked in the last days prepare the world for His coming. Pay close attention to those writings that describe the circumstances of the Restoration. In addition, identify the behaviors of the evil world as foreseen by Isaiah. Recognizing and identifying the prophesied iniquity of the last days will help you make righteous choices and avoid the great judgments that will befall the wicked.

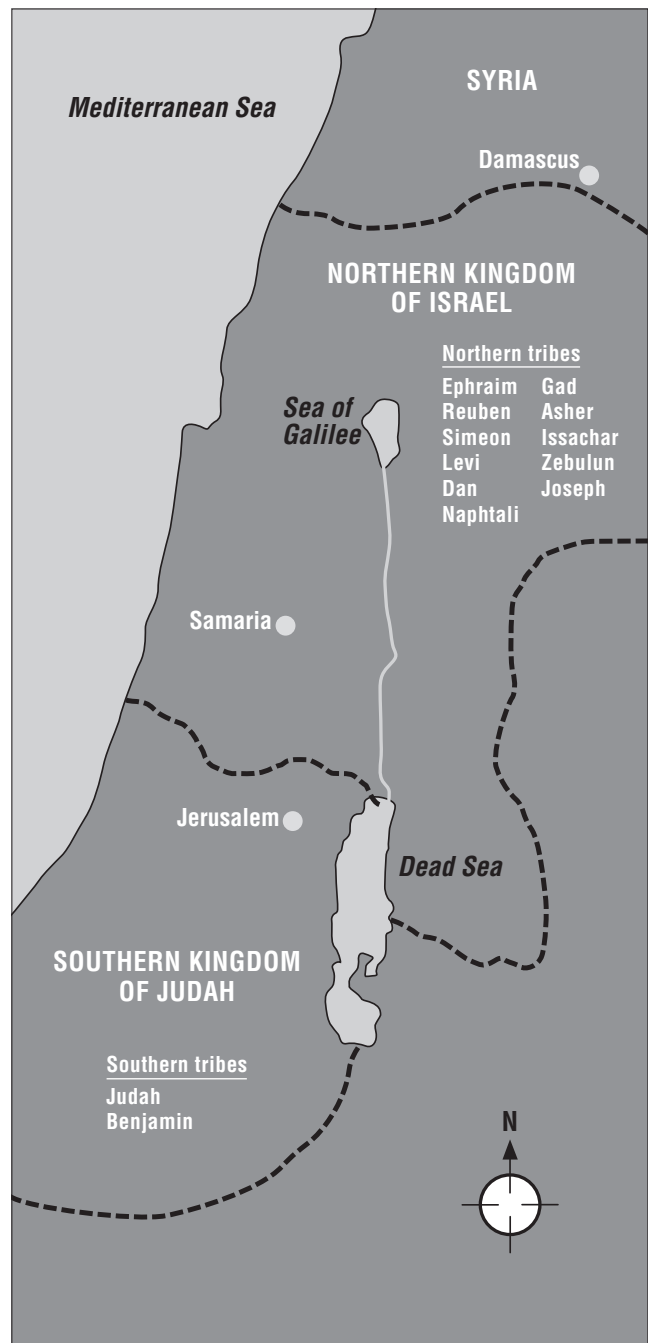
### Commentary

#### 2 Nephi 17–24. Overview and Background

- Many people have difficulty understanding Isaiah's writings because of the dual nature of his prophecies. On one hand, these prophecies relate directly to Isaiah's calling as a prophet and the circumstances surrounding his time and setting. On the other hand, he used those same events to describe events in the meridian of time as well as in the last days. It is helpful to be aware of the historical, geographical, and political context in which Isaiah prophesied (see 2 Nephi 25:5–6).

When Isaiah prophesied, there were two kingdoms of Israelites—the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel (also called Ephraim). A third country, Syria, was sometimes an enemy and sometimes an ally with either or both Israel and Judah (see Bible Dictionary, “Chronology: Kings of Judah and Israel,” 637–39). These countries were referred to by the following terms:

| Country | Capital city | Territory or Tribe | Leader                      |
|---------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Judah   | Jerusalem    | Judah              | Ahaz, of the house of David |
| Syria   | Damascus     | Aram               | Rezin                       |
| Israel  | Samaria      | Ephraim            | Pekah, son of Remaliah      |



- Isaiah's call to the ministry came during the decline of Judah's and Israel's power and prosperity. The northern kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) had formed an alliance with Syria for mutual strength and protection against the conquering empire of Assyria. When Judah refused to join the alliance, Israel and Syria attacked Judah (see 2 Nephi 17:1).

Isaiah was directed to warn Ahaz, the king of Judah, against seeking political alliances for Judah in order to defend his people, but Ahaz rejected the Lord's warning (see 2 Kings 16:7–20). Ahaz made an agreement with the Assyrian monarch, Tiglath-pileser II (Pul), and Judah became a vassal state, paying tribute to Assyria to escape the threat of Syria and Israel. Assyria gradually devoured the smaller kingdoms, however. First Damascus (Syria) fell in 732 B.C., then Samaria (Israel) in 722 B.C., and even all of Judah, except for Jerusalem, was overrun by Assyria by 701 B.C.

As with many of Isaiah's prophecies, there was a fulfillment during his own time (see 2 Kings 16–18), which is shown in the history of ancient Israel and Judah. A careful reading of 2 Nephi 17–24 (see also Isaiah 7–14) together with the chapter introductions teach that Isaiah's prophecies also relate to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the judgments that precede that wonderful, anticipated event.

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted the “multiple fulfillments” of Isaiah's prophecies in succeeding generations and the role of the Holy Ghost in understanding these important writings: “The book of Isaiah contains numerous prophecies that seem to have multiple fulfillments. One seems to involve the people of Isaiah's day or the circumstances of the next generation. Another meaning, often symbolic, seems to refer to events in the meridian of time. . . . Still another meaning or fulfillment of the same prophecy seems to relate to the events attending the Second Coming of the Savior. The fact that many of these prophecies can have multiple meanings underscores the importance of our seeking revelation from the Holy Ghost to help us interpret them” (“Scripture Reading and Revelation,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1995, 8).

### 2 Nephi 17:2. The House of David

- In 2 Nephi 17:2 the “house of David” refers to King Ahaz, a descendant of King David and heir to the throne of the kingdom of Judah.

- *Confederate* means to make an alliance with. Syria had formed an alliance with Ephraim, the northern kingdom of Israel.

- The phrase “heart was moved” shows that Ahaz and his people were afraid when they learned that Syria and Ephraim were allies.

### 2 Nephi 17:3. Meet at the Upper Pool

- The name of Isaiah's son *Shearjashub* meant “the remnant shall return” (see 2 Nephi 20:21–22; Isaiah 7:3a).

- The conduit referred to in 2 Nephi 17:3 is an aqueduct. Ahaz may have been checking the city's water supply in case of a siege during war.

- The fuller's field was a place where clothes were washed.

### 2 Nephi 17:4. “Smoking Firebrands”

- The description of kings Rezin and Pekah in 2 Nephi 17:4 as “smoking firebrands” is the image of a torch burned out, symbolic of having spent their strength. Rezin and Pekah were, in fact, powerless and soon to be crushed by Assyria.

### 2 Nephi 17:6. “Against Judah”

- To *vex* means to irritate or torment.

- The phrase “make a breach” indicates that Syria and Ephraim were going to try and force their way into Jerusalem.

- The son of Tabeal was a Syrian chosen by Syria and Ephraim to be the puppet ruler in Jerusalem.

### 2 Nephi 17:8. “Ephraim Be Broken”

- A score equals 20. Consequently, “three score and five years” means 65 years.

- The northern kingdom of Israel was captured by Assyria in 722 B.C., and many of the inhabitants (known today as the lost tribes of Israel) were carried away. Captives from other lands were relocated in the

area and eventually intermarried with the remaining Israelites and became known as the Samaritans. “Ephraim be broken” happened as prophesied; within the span of 65 years, Ephraim was no more.

**2 Nephi 17:9–14. “The Lord Himself Shall Give You a Sign”**

- The Hebrew word for virgin (*almah*) literally means “young woman,” also having the connotation of a virgin.



- *Immanuel*, a name for Jesus Christ, comes from words in Hebrew that mean “God with us.” Immanuel is a name-title given as a sign of God’s deliverance (see Isaiah 7:14). Isaiah’s reference to Immanuel had both a possible historic meaning and a prophetic meaning. In its most immediate meaning, it could indicate a child to be born in Isaiah’s time whose coming of age operated as a sign (see 2 Nephi 17:16–19). In its more important prophetic meaning, Immanuel is specifically identified by Matthew as a prophecy of Jesus’s birth into mortality (see Matthew 1:18–25). The name also appears in latter-day scripture (see 2 Nephi 17:14; 18:8; D&C 128:22). (For more information, see Guide to the Scriptures, “Immanuel,” 117; Bible Dictionary, “Immanuel,” 706.)

- “God with us” was meant to reassure King Ahaz that if he turned to the Lord, then God would help him. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how this also became another type and shadow of the Savior: “There are plural or parallel elements to this prophecy, as with so much of Isaiah’s writing. The most immediate meaning was probably focused on Isaiah’s wife, a pure and good woman who

brought forth a son about this time, the child becoming a type and shadow of the greater, later fulfillment of the prophecy that would be realized in the birth of Jesus Christ. The symbolism in the dual prophecy acquires additional importance when we realize that Isaiah’s wife may have been



of royal blood, and therefore her son would have been royalty of the line of David. Here again is a type, a prefiguration of the greater Immanuel, Jesus Christ, the ultimate son of David, the royal King who would be born of a literal virgin. Indeed, his title *Immanuel* would be carried forward to the latter days, being applied to the Savior in section 128 verse 22 of the Doctrine and Covenants” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 79).

| Themes         | Isaiah 7:14–17 (2 Nephi 17:14–17) | Isaiah 8:3–7 (2 Nephi 18:3–7)       | Matthew 1:21        |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Mother         | Virgin                            | Prophetess                          | She (Mary)          |
| Conception     | Shall conceive                    | Conceived                           | Bring forth         |
| Child is a son | Bear a son                        | Bare a son                          | A son               |
| Naming of son  | Call his name Immanuel            | Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz | Call his name Jesus |

**2 Nephi 17:16–22. The Destruction of Ephraim and Syria**

- In contrast to the promise that Judah would not totally perish, Isaiah prophesied the fall of the northern kingdom, “the land that thou abhorrest,” which opposed Ahaz (2 Nephi 17:16). The two kings in the north at that time were put to death by the Assyrians.
- The two nations of Ephraim and Syria would be destroyed by Assyria. Syria’s destruction came in

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Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* (1998), 74.

732 B.C. and Ephraim's followed in 722 B.C. As noted by Elder Holland (see commentary for 2 Nephi 17:14 on p. 83), the historic child of Isaiah's time would be about 12 or 13 years old, the age set by Judaic law for moral responsibility.

### 2 Nephi 17:20. Shaving Head and Beard

- Shaving the head and beard was customarily done to mourn a death in the family. The forcible shearing of a captive, however, insulted and identified the one in subjection.

### 2 Nephi 17:22. "Butter and Honey"

- Butter and honey may seem like luxury items, but the land was laid waste by the Assyrians (see 2 Nephi 17:23). Consequently, the survivors had to live off the land like nomadic Bedouins with no crops to eat. Butter and honey likely referred to the curdled yogurt that would come from goats or sheep and any wild honey that could be found.

### 2 Nephi 18. Assyria, the Lord's Instrument

- Chapter 18 of 2 Nephi is a continuation of the historical events introduced in chapter 17. Again, Isaiah warned Judah against alliances because, as he prophesied, they would be ineffective. The messianic promise of Immanuel ("God with us") would prevail in their behalf. The Assyrian invasion would come, but Judah would still survive. Isaiah concluded his writing with a warning against the false teachings and practices that would pull Judah away from the commandments that had been revealed to them.

### 2 Nephi 18:1. Maher-shalal-hash-baz

- The name of Isaiah's son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, means "destruction is imminent" (see 2 Nephi 20:6). The name likely symbolizes Assyria coming to destroy Israel (see Isaiah 8:1*d*).

### 2 Nephi 18:3. Prophetess

- The term *prophetess* refers to Isaiah's wife. She may have had prophetic ability, and her son is probably the initial fulfillment of the prophecy recorded in 2 Nephi 17:14.

### 2 Nephi 18:4. "Knowledge to Cry"

- The description "the child shall not have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother" refers to Isaiah's son Maher-shalal-hash-baz at about the age of two. By 732 B.C. Syria and the northern part of Samaria (Israel) were destroyed by Assyria. Israel was not completely conquered until 722 B.C.

### 2 Nephi 18:6–7. "The Waters of Shiloah That Go Softly"

- One commentary explains a possible meaning of the comparison between "the waters of Shiloah that go softly" (2 Nephi 18:6) and the "strong and many" (v. 7) waters of the river: "Isaiah describes and then contrasts two forms of waters—the soft, rolling waters of Shiloah, located near the temple mount of Jerusalem, and the waters of the Euphrates, a great river that often floods out of control. The waters of Shiloah are controlled and inviting, whereas the Euphrates is dangerous and destructive. The waters of Shiloah bring life to those who drink them; the Euphrates brings death to those who are swept up in its flood. Isaiah's images of the two waters are symbolic: the former represents Jesus, the King of Heaven, who is likened to the waters of life; the latter is the king of Assyria, who leads his great, destructive armies and 'cover the earth [like a flood . . . and] destroy the inhabitants thereof' (Jer. 46:8). Inasmuch as the inhabitants of Judah had rejected Jesus, or the waters of Shiloah, the Lord set upon them the king of Assyria, or the strong and mighty waters of the river that would overflow their banks and cover the entire land with its destruction" (Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* [1998], 83).

### 2 Nephi 18:8. "Even to the Neck"

- The symbolic expression "even to the neck" indicates that the king of Assyria will conquer Judah's lands, even to Jerusalem. By 701 B.C., Assyria had overrun all of Judah except its capital city.

### 2 Nephi 18:8, 10. "God Is with Us"

- At the point when Assyria overran Judah, all seemed to be lost, but Immanuel, or "God is with us," prevented the destruction of Jerusalem (2 Nephi 18:10).

Isaiah 37:33–36 describes this miraculous event where not even an arrow flew over the walls.

### 2 Nephi 18:14. A Sanctuary, “a Stone of Stumbling”

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted the ability of “Immanuel” to both save and condemn: “When the stone of Israel comes, he shall be a sanctuary for the righteous; they shall find peace and safety under the shelter of his gospel; but he shall be a Stone of Stumbling and a Rock of Offense (as also a gin and a snare) to the rebellious and disobedient in Jerusalem and in all Israel. They shall stumble and fall because of him; they shall take offense because of his teachings and be condemned and broken and snared and taken for rejecting them” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1971–73], 3:292–93).

### 2 Nephi 18:17. “I Will Wait upon the Lord”

- Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the spiritual strength that follows when we place our trust in the Lord:

“As we put our faith and trust in the Lord, we must battle our pain day by day and sometimes hour by hour, even moment by moment; but in the end, we understand that marvelous counsel given to the Prophet Joseph Smith as he struggled with his pain of feeling forgotten and isolated in Liberty Jail:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“‘And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes’ (D&C 121:7–8).

“My dear brothers and sisters, when pain, tests, and trials come in life, draw near to the Savior. ‘Wait upon the Lord, . . . look for him’ (Isaiah 8:17; 2 Nephi 18:17). ‘They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint’ (Isaiah 40:31). Healing comes in the Lord’s time and the Lord’s way; be patient” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 17).

### 2 Nephi 18:19. “Familiar Spirits, and . . . Wizards That Peep”

- In those dark times, the people resorted to consulting the spirits of the dead instead of trusting in the Lord. The peeping and muttering of the wizards refers to the chirping noises and whispered chants of a medium supposedly contacting the dead.

### 2 Nephi 19. “Unto Us a Child Is Born”

- As the Assyrians swept down against the alliance of Israel (Ephraim) and the Syrians, they destroyed Damascus and captured the northern region of Israel, later called Galilee (see 2 Kings 15:27–31). The text in



2 Nephi 19:1 refers to this occurrence as a “vexation” that brought “dimness.” In spite of this invasion and the threat it posed for the rest of Israel and for Judah in the south, Isaiah prophesied of the coming of the Messiah to this region as the coming of “a great light” (2 Nephi 19:2).

The lands inherited by the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were in northern Israel, or Galilee, where Jesus was raised and spent most of His ministry. Matthew and John saw the fact that the Messiah dwelt in the area of Galilee as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (see Matthew 4:12–16; John 1:5).

### 2 Nephi 19:6–7. “The Government Shall Be upon His Shoulder”

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland wrote of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in 2 Nephi 19:6–7 being related to both the Atonement and the time of the Millennium: “The fact that the government would eventually be upon his shoulders affirms what all the world will one day acknowledge—that he is Lord of lords and King of kings and will one day rule over the earth and his Church in person, with all the majesty and sacred vestments belonging to a holy sovereign and a high priest. All can take comfort from the fact that because the government—and the burdens thereof—will be upon his shoulders, they will be lifted in great measure

from our own. This is yet another reference in Isaiah to the Atonement, the bearing away of our sins (or at very least in this reference, our temporal burdens) on the shoulders of Christ” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, 80).

**2 NEPHI 19:6–7**

*How can each of the titles assigned to the Lord Jesus Christ add new meaning to our understanding of the Savior?*

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland also helped us see the importance of the various titles applied to the Lord Jesus Christ:

“As ‘Wonderful Counselor,’ he will be our mediator, our intercessor, defending our cause in the courts of heaven. ‘The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people,’ Isaiah (and Nephi) reminded earlier [2 Nephi 13:13]. Note the wonderful compassion of our counselor and spokesman in this passage of latter-day scripture:

“‘Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—

“‘Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

“‘Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life’ [D&C 45:3–5].

“Of course, as noted by Isaiah, Christ is not only a mediator but also a judge [see Mosiah 3:10; Moroni 10:34; Moses 6:57]. It is in that role of judge that we may find even greater meaning in Abinadi’s repeated expression that ‘God himself’ will come down to redeem his people [Mosiah 13:28; see also Mosiah 13:34; 15:1; Alma 42:15]. It is as if the judge in that great courtroom in heaven, unwilling to ask anyone but himself to bear the burdens of the guilty people standing in the dock, takes off his judicial robes and comes down to earth to bear their stripes personally.

Christ as merciful judge is as beautiful and wonderful a concept as that of Christ as counselor, mediator, and advocate.

“‘Mighty God’ conveys something of the power of God, his strength, omnipotence, and unconquerable influence. Isaiah sees him as always able to overcome the effects of sin and transgression in his people and to triumph forever over the would-be oppressors of the children of Israel.



“‘Everlasting Father’ underscores the fundamental doctrine that Christ is a Father—Creator of worlds without number, the Father of restored physical life through the Resurrection, the Father of eternal life for his spiritually begotten sons and daughters, and the One acting for the Father (Elohim) through divine investiture of authority. All should seek to be born of him and become his sons and his daughters [see Mosiah 5:7].

“Lastly, with the phrase ‘Prince of Peace,’ we rejoice that when the King shall come, there will be no more war in the human heart or among the nations of the world. This is a peaceful king, the king of Salem, the city that would later become Jeru-Salem. Christ will bring peace to those who accept him in mortality in whatever era they live, and he will bring peace to all those in his millennial and postmillennial realms of glory” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, 80–82).

### 2 Nephi 19:11–12. “His Hand Is Stretched Out Still”

- The “adversaries of Rezin” were the Assyrians.
- While the phrase “his hand is stretched out still” is most often an expression of righteous anger, it is elsewhere portrayed as a hand of mercy (see 2 Nephi 28:32; Jacob 6:4–5).

### 2 Nephi 19:18–19. “Fuel of the Fire”

- In 2 Nephi 19:5 the bloody battle gear is fuel for the fire in preparation for the joy and peace of the “great light” (v. 2). In contrast, the fuel for the fire in verses 18–19 is wickedness, including the people who continue in darkness to the point of not sparing even their own brother.

### 2 Nephi 20. God’s Judgment on Assyria

- Although the Assyrians were allowed to prevail against Israel and Judah, they also faced the judgments of God for their unrighteousness. Chapter 20 of 2 Nephi contains a prophecy concerning the destiny of Assyria, the fulfillment of which has been historically confirmed. Isaiah mentioned some of the successful military campaigns of Assyria (see v. 9) and prophesied of the eventual intrusion and success against Judah, even listing the names of many of the cities of Judah that would fall to Assyria (see vv. 28–32). Nevertheless, the Assyrians eventually failed and the destruction of both Israel and Assyria is described as complete (see vv. 15–19). The destruction of Israel and Assyria is also a type of the destruction of the wicked in any age, including the latter days.

### 2 Nephi 20:5–6. “The Rod of Mine Anger”

- In His mercy the Lord sent prophets repeatedly to call His people to repentance. When the prophets were rejected, the Lord allowed Assyria to become a punishing rod to His people. When that purpose had been fulfilled, the Lord then punished Assyria for its wickedness (see 2 Nephi 20:12) by the hand of another nation, Babylon.

#### 2 NEPHI 20:12–14

Compare Moses 4:1–4 with these verses. How is the king of Assyria a model by which Isaiah can teach you of the adversary?

### 2 Nephi 20:12–15. “Shall the Ax Boast Itself . . . ?”

- The Lord compared Assyria to an ax that boasts against the one holding the handle. The ax (Assyria) has no strength in and of itself, and its reign is about to collapse.

### 2 Nephi 20:16–19. The Wicked to Be Destroyed in One Day

- Isaiah used the fall of Assyria as a type and shadow of the destruction of the wicked at the Second Coming. Elder Bruce R. McConkie instructed readers of this passage how to arrange and understand the writings in the context of the Second Coming: “It is Isaiah, speaking of the Second Coming, who says: ‘And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day.’ So it is said of the day of burning when the vineyard is cleansed. ‘And [the fire] shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body,’ the account continues. ‘And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.’ The wickedness of men is so widespread, and their evils are so great, that few—comparatively—shall abide the day. ‘And it shall come to pass in that day’—the day of burning, the day when every corruptible thing is consumed, the day when few men are left—that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.’ (Isa. 10:17–21.) They shall be gathered after the coming of the Lord” (*The Millennial Messiah* [1982], 315–16).

## 2 Nephi 21. The Branch of Jesse

- The Lord taught Isaiah profound truths concerning the latter days by providing comprehensive visions. Like Moroni (see Mormon 8:34–35), Isaiah saw the circumstances of our day and the events by which the Lord would bring to pass the great millennial day. Many of Isaiah’s prophecies relate directly to the Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

### 2 Nephi 21:1–5, 10. The Stem, Branch, and Rod

- When Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith on September 21, 1823, “he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled” (Joseph Smith—History 1:40). Who is the stem of Jesse and who is the rod to come forth out of that stem? The Lord answered these questions in Doctrine and Covenants 113:1–4. Still, careful reading and pondering are needed to decide who is meant by each symbolic term.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie identified Christ as the Branch during the Millennium: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper.’ . . . (Jer. 23:3–6.) That is to say, the King who shall reign personally upon the earth during the Millennium shall be the Branch who grew out of the house of David. . . . He is the Lord Jehovah, even him whom we call Christ” (*The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* [1978], 193).

An additional insight regarding the Lord’s kingdom in the latter days is interwoven with the messianic prediction in 2 Nephi 21:1: “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse.” Latter-day revelation identifies this rod as “a servant in the hands of Christ” (D&C 113:4). The idea of a latter-day servant is repeated poetically in 2 Nephi 21:10, this time referred to as “a root of Jesse.” This root is identified as an individual who will hold the priesthood “and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days” (D&C 113:6). The Prophet Joseph Smith was such an individual. So also is each succeeding prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie expressed this same feeling: “Are we amiss in saying that the prophet here

mentioned is Joseph Smith, to whom the priesthood came, who received the keys of the kingdom, and who raised the ensign for the gathering of the Lord’s people in our dispensation? And is he not also the ‘servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power?’ (D&C 113:4–6.) Those whose ears are attuned to the whisperings of the Infinite will know the meaning of these things” (*Millennial Messiah*, 339–40).

### 2 Nephi 21:9. “The Earth Shall Be Full of the Knowledge of the Lord”

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught that the outpouring of knowledge from the heavens includes a knowledge of God’s ways, an increase in the presence of the Holy Ghost, and an understanding of the doctrine of the priesthood:

“In our day we are experiencing an explosion of knowledge about the world and its people. But the people of the world are not experiencing a comparable expansion of knowledge about God and his plan for his children. On that subject, what the world needs is not more scholarship and technology but more righteousness and revelation.

“I long for the day prophesied by Isaiah when ‘the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord’ (Isaiah 11:9; 2 Nephi 21:9). In an inspired utterance, the Prophet Joseph Smith described the Lord’s ‘pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints’ (D&C 121:33). This will not happen for those whose ‘hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men’

(121:35). Those who fail to learn and use ‘principles of righteousness’ (121:36) will be left to themselves to kick against those in authority, ‘to persecute the saints, and to fight against God’ (121:38). In contrast, the Lord makes this great promise to the faithful:





“The doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever’ (D&C 121:45–46)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 38–39; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 30).

### 2 Nephi 21:10–16. The Latter-day Gathering

- On September 21–22, 1823, the angel Moroni appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith five different times. In four of the five visits, among other instructions, Isaiah chapter 11 was quoted with the declaration that it was about to be fulfilled (see Joseph Smith—History 1:40). Within a few years the Prophet Joseph Smith was given the priesthood keys necessary to begin fulfilling this prophecy (see D&C 110:11).

### 2 Nephi 21:11. The Second Gathering

- The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) taught that the time for the second gathering of the house of Israel is specifically reserved for the last days:

“The time has at last arrived when the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has set His hand again the second time to recover the remnants of his people, which have been left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea, and with them to bring in the fulness of the Gentiles, and establish that covenant with them, which was promised when their sins should be taken away. . . . This covenant has never been established with the house of Israel, nor with the house of Judah. . . .

“Christ, in the day of His flesh, proposed to make a covenant with them, but they rejected Him and His proposals, and in consequence thereof, they were broken off, and no covenant was made with them at that time. . . .

“Thus after this chosen family had rejected Christ and His proposals, the heralds of salvation said to them, ‘Lo, we turn unto the Gentiles;’ and the Gentiles received the covenant, and were grafted in from

whence the chosen family were broken off” (*History of the Church*, 1:313).

### 2 Nephi 22. Songs of Praise

- Chapter 22 of 2 Nephi contains two hymns of thanksgiving and praise for the millennial day. They present the great promise that the people will accept the Lord, praise Him, and enjoy His blessings. It will be a time when all will share their testimonies, gratitude, and love for each other. Hymn 89, “The Lord Is My Light,” in the LDS hymnbook is based on this phrase used by Isaiah in chapter 12, verse 2.

### 2 Nephi 22:3. “Water out of the Wells of Salvation”

- Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles identified the source of living water: “The Lord provides the living water that can quench the burning thirst of those whose lives are parched by a drought of truth. He expects us to supply to them the fulness of the gospel by giving them the scriptures and the words of the prophets and to bear personal testimony as to the truth of the restored gospel to alleviate their thirst. When they drink from the cup of gospel knowledge, their thirst is satisfied as they come to understand our Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 23; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 19).

### 2 Nephi 23. The Destruction of Babylon

- Isaiah foresaw the graphic destruction of Babylon, the degradation of its nobility, and the universal wickedness of its masses. God issued a call for forces to gather together to overthrow Babylon (see 2 Nephi 13:2–6). The call was answered when an alliance of Medes and Persians under Cyrus the Great dammed the Euphrates River and marched through the riverbed and under the walls of Babylon to capture the city and overthrow the empire in 538 B.C. The significance of the incident is more clearly indicated by considering the imagery of the term *Babylon* in a spiritual sense. In his prophecies Isaiah also used the term *Babylon* to typify the general spiritual condition of the world in the last days. The call is for the “sanctified ones” (2 Nephi 23:3), the Saints of the latter days, to gather together

and join with God in overthrowing wickedness (Babylon) from the world.



### 2 Nephi 23:6. “The Day of the Lord”

- The phrase “the day of the Lord” is used many times to describe the judgments of the Lord that will punish the wicked and preserve the righteous. In preparation for that day the Lord said, “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30).

### 2 Nephi 24:4–20. The Fall of Lucifer and the Fall of Babylon

- In 2 Nephi 24 the Lord, through Isaiah, condemned the wickedness of the house of Israel. He prophesied that great judgments would come upon it because of the evils within it. Generally, these judgments were to be carried out by other nations. Isaiah’s prophetic vision of this destruction highlights the role of the adversary as the principal mover of the distress among the nations. By prophetic authority, we see that ultimately Lucifer will fail.

### 2 Nephi 24:12. Lucifer

- The only places in the Bible and the Book of Mormon where the name *Lucifer* is used are Isaiah 14:12 and 2 Nephi 24:12. In Doctrine and Covenants 76:25–28 we learn that Lucifer (which means

“lightbearer”) was the premortal name of Satan. Because of his rebellion against God, he fell from his position of “authority in the presence of God” (v. 25) and “was called Perdition” (v. 26), which means “destruction.”

Isaiah used the story of Lucifer’s pride and his fall from heaven (see 2 Nephi 24:12–19) to typify the king of Babylon’s ambitions and eventual downfall (see v. 4).

Isaiah’s description of Babylon and her rulers are also a type and shadow of when Satan will be bound and will have no power over the nations during the Millennium. While he will be loosed for a little season after the Millennium, he will ultimately lose all power at the end of the earth’s mortal history. He and the sons of perdition will be relegated to “outer darkness.”

- President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) identified the principal flaw in Satan’s character that led to his fall from heaven:

“In the premortal council, it was pride that felled Lucifer, ‘a son of the morning’ (2 Nephi 24:12–15; see also D&C 76:25–27; Moses 4:3). . . .

“In the pre-earthly council, Lucifer placed his proposal in competition with the Father’s plan as advocated by Jesus Christ (see Moses 4:1–3). He wished to be honored above all others (see 2 Nephi 24:13). In short, his prideful desire was to dethrone God (see D&C 29:36; 76:28)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 3–4; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 4–5).

#### **2 NEPHI 24:12–20**

*In what ways has Lucifer made his presence felt among the nations of the earth? What will the consequences be for his behavior?*

## Points to Ponder

- As you study 2 Nephi 17–19, look for ways the life of Jesus Christ is central to the purposes of the last days.
- Which of Isaiah’s warnings concerning the judgments of the last days are the most significant to you?
- In what ways will the Second Coming be both “great” and “dreadful”?

## Suggested Assignments

- Once you have carefully read and studied these chapters of Isaiah and the interpretive commentary on them, write on a separate sheet of paper what you consider to be the most important prophetic insights that have significance and application for you as a Latter-day Saint and our world today.

Identify a major theme from each of the following scripture blocks:

2 Nephi 17–18 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 Nephi 19 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 Nephi 20:12–19 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 Nephi 21:10–14 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 Nephi 22 \_\_\_\_\_  
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2 Nephi 23 \_\_\_\_\_  
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2 Nephi 24 \_\_\_\_\_  
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