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"More Fully Persuaded": Isaiah's Witness of Christ's Ministry

Author(s): Jeffrey R. Holland

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“More Fully Persuaded” Isaiah’s Witness of Christ’s Ministry

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

As a testament of Jesus Christ, the Book of Mormon centers on the Redeemer’s ministry and, to this end, uses Isaiah as a witness of Christ’s past, present, and future loving and saving acts.



I am honored to speak of Isaiah’s witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so I acknowledge on the one hand my great inadequacy and on the other the grandeur of the Savior as subject and Isaiah as writer. Nevertheless, I am determined to proceed, if only because of my love for this magnificent messianic message and the texts that bring it to us.¹

I have taken my title from 1 Nephi 19. In that chapter Nephi says he read and taught his brethren many things, “that they might know concerning the doings of the Lord in other lands, among people of old” (1 Nephi 19:22). Citing several of the ancient prophets from the engraved plates carrying such information, Nephi then says, “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” (1 Nephi 19:23).

Although for the most part I use the King James rendering of the Isaiah passages in this paper, nevertheless I have (with just two exceptions) used only those verses that also appear in the Book of Mormon. I do that, first, because the Book of Mormon does such a marvelous job of focusing Isaiah’s witness for Christ, and second, because this will remind us all of the grand purpose of the Book of Mormon: to convince “the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations” (Book of

Mormon, title page). Isaiah's words fulfill this purpose in a singular and inspiring way, and no other textual source in all the world makes the contribution to understanding Isaiah that the Book of Mormon makes. Its impact is still not fully recognized and its depths are still not fully plumbed. We can help the whole world be "more fully persuaded" of Christ's divinity because of our Latter-day Saint view of him as seen through the eyes of Isaiah.

In a helpful footnote to 2 Nephi 12:2, our current edition of the LDS scriptures notes that there are some 433 verses of Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon. According to Monte Nyman, of those 433 (or so) verses of Isaiah, some 391 of them refer to the attributes or mission of Christ.² In that same vein, Donald Parry pointed out to me that Isaiah provides 61 names and titles of deity in his writings. Those names and titles are found 708 times in the book of Isaiah, giving us an average appearance of one every 1.9 verses.

Surely it is because of this messianic focus in Isaiah—a messianic preoccupation, we might say—that Nephi feels so strongly about his writings:

Wherefore, hearken, O my people, which are of the house of Israel, and give ear unto my words; for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy. . . . Yea, and my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah. . . . [and] they are of worth unto the children of men, and he that supposeth that they are not, unto them will I speak particularly, . . . for I know that they shall be of great worth unto them in the last days; for in that day shall they understand them; wherefore, for their good have I written them. (2 Nephi 25:4, 5, 8)

In our own time Elder Bruce R. McConkie has said:

If our eternal salvation depends upon our ability to understand the writings of Isaiah as fully and truly as

Nephi understood them—and who shall say such is not the case!—how shall we fare in that great day when with Nephi we shall stand before the pleasing bar of Him who said: “great are the words of Isaiah”? . . .

It just may be that my salvation (and yours also!) does in fact depend upon our ability to understand the writings of Isaiah as fully and truly as Nephi understood them. . . .

Isaiah is everywhere known as the messianic prophet because of the abundance, beauty, and perfection of his prophetic utterances foretelling the first coming of our Lord. And truly such he is. No old world prophet, whose inspired sayings have come down to us, can compare with him in this respect. Moreover, the first coming of the Messiah is past, and so even those among us who are not overly endowed with spiritual insight can look back and see in the birth, ministry, and death of our Lord the fulfillment of Isaiah's forecasts.³

It was, after all, the Savior of the world himself who said, after quoting to the Nephites chapter 54 of Isaiah, “And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. [By “these things” I presume he means all the writings of Isaiah generally and not just chapter 54.] Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah. For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel” (3 Nephi 23:1–2).

One of the reasons Nephi feels so strongly about Isaiah and, as I have said elsewhere,⁴ one of the reasons Isaiah is so conspicuous at the outset of the Book of Mormon is that Isaiah and Nephi (along with Nephi's younger brother Jacob) constitute the original “three witnesses” of the Book of Mormon—or more precisely the original three Book of Mormon witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ and his divinity.

Nephi wrote:

And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him; wherefore, I will send their words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words. . . . And now I write some of the words of Isaiah, that whoso of my people shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men. Now these are the words, and ye may liken them unto you and unto all men. (2 Nephi 11:2, 3, 8)

It would seem, even in Isaiah's very name, which in Hebrew means "Jehovah saves" or "the Lord is salvation," that Isaiah was prepared from birth—and of course we would say from before birth—to testify of the Messiah and bear such witness of the divinity of Christ's coming.

It is, of course, important to remember that many of Isaiah's prophecies can be or have been or will be fulfilled in more than one way and in more than one dispensation.⁵ Obviously, we have material in Isaiah's writings that applies to a whole range of experiences, including that of the premortal Christ, of his first mortal advent in the meridian of time, and of his Second Coming in the latter days.

New Testament contemporaries struggled with the duality of Isaiah's prophecies a bit, perhaps too eagerly taking a passage clearly applying to Christ's Second Coming and forcing it to represent his appearance in the meridian of time. Of course, when Christ refused to proclaim himself the messiah of the last days in his first advent, some were disappointed. But everyone should learn a little patience in

all of this: many of those prophecies have since then been fulfilled, and they will all be fulfilled in time.

Let me leave these introductory comments and turn to five aspects of Christ's divine mission that are testified of and outlined by Isaiah. As all of you know, there is much messianic material from Isaiah that could be included. Nevertheless, I will limit my categories to five. Even with that small number I can give only a few "headlines"—or, if you prefer, "heads," as Jacob calls them in the Book of Mormon (Jacob 1:4).

Christ's Birth, Mortal Ministry, and Atonement

I begin with the great Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7 and 2 Nephi 17:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria. (Isaiah 7:14–17, parallel to 2 Nephi 17:14–17)

As given in the Old Testament, this passage was intended to be a sign to King Ahaz, encouraging him to take his strength from the Lord and put his faith in the power of heaven, rather than in the military might of Damascus or Samaria or other militant camps in the neighborhood. Ahaz was not particularly interested in this sign, but the Lord gave it to him anyway, specifying that a virgin would conceive and bring forth a son whose name would be called Immanuel.

The dual or parallel fulfillment of this prophecy comes in the realization that Isaiah's wife, a pure and good young woman—symbolically representing another pure young woman—did bring forth a son. This boy's birth was a type and shadow of the greater and later fulfillment of that prophecy, the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The dual fulfillment here is particularly interesting in light of the fact that Isaiah's wife apparently was of royal blood, and therefore her son was of the royal line of David. Isaiah's son is thus the type, the prefiguring, of the greater Immanuel, Jesus Christ, the ultimate King who would be born of a literal virgin. His title Immanuel would be carried forward to latter days, being applied to the Savior in Doctrine and Covenants 128:22.

Turning to Isaiah 9 and 2 Nephi 19, there are many ways to use this famous passage, including as the coronation of a King/Messiah, but let me refer to it here for its references to Christ's birth. We all love and respond to these lines perhaps made more famous by George F. Handel than by Isaiah himself: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6, parallel to 2 Nephi 19:6).

One of the things I love most about this magnificent passage, even with its splendor and royalty and culmination, is the reminder that through it all Christ is still the son. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." He is the child of heaven, the Son of God, of whom the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "When still a boy He had all the intelligence necessary to enable Him to rule and govern the kingdom of the Jews, and could reason with the wisest and most profound doctors of law and divinity, and make their

theories and practice to appear like folly compared with the wisdom He possessed.”⁶

The fact that the government will eventually be upon his shoulder affirms what all Latter-day Saints clearly understand—that he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings and will one day rule over his kingdom in person, with all of the majesty and sacred vestments that belong to a high priest and to a holy sovereign. And we all take great comfort from the fact that because the government—and its burdens—will be upon his shoulders, such concerns will therefore be lifted in great measure from ours.

This idea of the Messiah bearing the burden of the government seems to me yet another not-so-oblique reference in Isaiah to the atonement. Bearing that burden refers to Christ's bearing away our sins—or at the very least our temporal, teletial problems—on his shoulders. As Wonderful Counselor he will be our mediator, our intercessor, defending our case in the courts of heaven. “The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people,” Isaiah had written earlier (Isaiah 3:13, parallel to 2 Nephi 13:13).

From latter-day scripture comes this affirmation:

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)

As Isaiah notes, Christ is not only a mediator but also a judge (see Mosiah 3:10; Moroni 10:34; Moses 6:57). In fact, it is in Christ's role of judge that I find even greater meaning

in Abinadi's repeated references to the fact that "God himself" shall come down to redeem his people. In that great courtroom in heaven I see the judge, as it were, unwilling to ask anyone but himself to bear the burdens of all the guilty people standing in the dock, so he himself takes off his judicial robes and comes down to bear their stripes. I love the merciful imagery of this kind of mediator and judge.

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

"Everlasting Father" suggests one of those very special Book of Mormon doctrines regarding the several ways in which Christ is the father—the Creator of worlds without number (Mosiah 3:8), the Father of restored physical life through the resurrection (Mosiah 15:8), the Father of eternal life for his spiritually begotten sons and daughters (Mosiah 5:7), and representative of the Father (3 Nephi 11:36) acting through divine investiture of authority. We should all want to be born of him and become new sons and daughters of this "Father" (see Mosiah 5:7).

Lastly, with the phrase "Prince of Peace," we rejoice that when the King shall come there shall be no more war in the human heart or among the nations of the world, for Satan shall be bound. This is a peaceful king, the king of Salem (Salem meaning "peace" in Hebrew; compare Alma 13:18). Christ will bring peace to those who accept him in mortality, and he will also bring peace to those in the millennial and post-millennial realms of his glory.

Christ Visits the Spirits in Prison

In Isaiah 49:8–9, we read: “Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.” The Prophet Joseph Smith, commenting on this passage and others like it, said,

Peter, also, in speaking concerning our Savior, says, that “He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.” (1 Peter 3:19, 20.) Here then we have an account of our Savior preaching to the spirits in prison, to spirits that had been imprisoned from the days of Noah; and what did He preach to them? That they were to stay there? Certainly not! Let His own declaration testify. “He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight of the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” (Luke 4:18.) Isaiah has it—“To bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness from the prison house.” (Isaiah 42:7.) It is very evident from this that He not only went to preach to them, but to deliver, or bring them out of the prison house.⁷

In teaching this doctrine, the Prophet Joseph might well have used the other magnificent passage from Isaiah 61 that so eloquently and lyrically refers to Christ’s freeing the bands of physical and spiritual death: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind

up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Isaiah 61:1). On both sides of the veil, we rejoice as Christ throws wide the prison doors.

Christ Shows Kindness and Preserves Latter-day Zion

Isaiah 49:13–16 contains a beautiful reference—also in the first block of Isaiah’s passages used in the Book of Mormon as we now have it (1 Nephi 21:13–16)—regarding Christ’s care for Zion, both ancient and latter day. That care is conveyed through moving images of the crucifixion and atonement of Jesus Christ:

Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. 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.

Graven upon the palms of his hands are those marks of the crucifiers’ nails, a sign to his disciples in the Old World, to his Nephite congregation in the New World, and to us in latter-day appearances that he is the Savior of the world and was crucified in “the house of [his] friends” (Luke 24:39; 3 Nephi 11:14; D&C 45:52).

The beautiful imagery in Isaiah 49 provides another reminder of Christ’s saving role—that of a protecting, redeeming parent to Zion’s children. He comforts his people and shows mercy when they are afflicted very much as any loving father or mother would show toward a child—but,

as Isaiah records, the intensity and extent of his care is much greater than that of any other loving father and mother. Although we parents may think it unlikely that a mother could forget her sucking child, yet that could happen. But what cannot ever happen and will not ever happen is that Christ would forget his children or his covenant made with them in Zion.

This image of Christ as a protective, redemptive, loving father is carried over to Isaiah 50, in which Christ speaks to the children of Israel—as his children:

Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, . . . or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?" (Isaiah 50:1-2; compare 2 Nephi 7:1-2)

These children will yet have a happy home and sealed parents. In the last days, that bill of divorcement against their mother will be set aside and so will the demands of any creditors against their transgressions. The Lord is in debt to no one, so neither will his children be. He alone can pay the price for the salvation of Israel and the establishment of Zion. His wrath is turned away, and he has not cast off the bride or sold her children into slavery.

As far as the shortening of hands, the scriptures repeatedly testify that the reach of God's arm is more than adequate. He can always claim and embrace the Israel that he loves. In spite of his family's faithlessness, his hand remains constant, not shortened or slackened or withheld. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with

everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isaiah 54:8, parallel to 3 Nephi 22:8).

The Millennial Christ

One of the most important passages in all of Isaiah is rich with nuances of the Restoration and is a favorite of Latter-day Saints:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. (Isaiah 11:1–5, parallel to 2 Nephi 21:1–5)

It is clear from the Book of Mormon (see especially 2 Nephi 30:9) and from the Doctrine and Covenants (section 113) that the main character in this passage is Jesus Christ. Joseph Smith, recalling the visit of the angel Moroni on the night of 21 September 1823, wrote that Moroni "quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled."⁸

The discussion of the tree in Isaiah 11:1 is a natural continuation of the prophecy through that portion of Isaiah in which the Lord is cutting down boughs, hewing the particularly lofty and arrogant ones, leveling thickets of the forest in every direction (see Isaiah 10). Israel's history, as is

so often the case, is compared to a tree. At this point in Isaiah 11, all that remains of it is a stump. Heaven's forester carefully trims his trees—Latter-day Saints think instantly of Jacob 5 in the Book of Mormon—and in this manner he clears out the evil trees of his forest and prepares the way for flourishing new shoots to come out of the stump of Jesse. (Donald Parry tells me that “shoot” is a better translation from the Hebrew than “rod,” and “stump” is better than “stem.”)

So it is with the restoration of the gospel. It is like the new shoot out of the old stump, and we see the fruits of those labors in—and with—Zion. Note this statement from Elder McConkie about the “branch.” He says:

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 shall execute judgment and justice in all the earth because he is the Lord Jehovah, even him whom we call Christ.⁹

Through Zechariah the Lord spoke similarly: “Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: . . . I will bring forth my servant the Branch. . . . I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day. . . . In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree” (Zechariah 3:7–10). Of that glorious millennial day the Lord says also: “Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule upon his throne” (Zechariah 6:12–13).

Brother McConkie concludes:

That the Branch of David is Christ is perfectly clear. . . . He is a new David, an Eternal David, who shall reign forever on the throne of his ancient ancestor. . . .

. . . David's temporal throne fell long centuries before our Lord was born, and that portion of Israel which had

not been scattered to the ends of the earth was in bondage to the iron yoke of Rome. But the promises remain. The eternal throne shall be restored in due course with a new David sitting thereon, and he shall reign forever and ever. . . .

How glorious shall be the coming day when the second David, who is Christ, reigns on the throne of the first David; when all men shall dwell safely; when the earth shall be dotted with temples; and when the gospel covenant shall have full force and validity in all the earth!¹⁰

There is a warning in all of this as we note the need for appropriate fear of the Lord and the reproof that will accompany his coming: “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked” (Isaiah 11:4, parallel to 2 Nephi 21:4). Nephi repeats this sentiment in almost identical language when he says near the end of his life,

And with righteousness shall the Lord God judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. For the time speedily cometh that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire. (2 Nephi 30:9–10)

This doctrine evoked the following declaration from the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Behold, He will not fail you! He will come with ten thousand of His Saints, and all His adversaries shall be destroyed with the breath of His lips!”¹¹ In that day the word will come with power, yea with power in his word, and Christ’s judgment will be the truth he speaks and the acknowledgment of that truth extracted from those who hear him.

In this millennial moment the Messiah will usher in the long-sought-for peace all have anticipated:

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. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11:6–10, parallel to 2 Nephi 21:6–10)

In equally triumphant language, referring to the temples of the last days as well as the headquarters of the Kingdom of God on earth, Isaiah prophesied:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. (Isaiah 2:2–5, parallel to 2 Nephi 12:2–5)

Images of the Crucifixion and Atonement

I conclude with a point of personal privilege. I wish to share three passages from Isaiah's text. More beautiful passages do not exist regarding the Savior's atonement and crucifixion. I provide no commentary but invite you to enjoy the poetic eloquence of a prophet's testimony.

First I cite the messianic declaration Christ gave that day to those startled rabbis in the synagogue of Nazareth when he began his ministry:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1–3; see also Luke 4:17–19)

I add to that Isaiah 50:5–7:

The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

And lastly Isaiah 53, one of my favorite chapters in all of Holy Writ:

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:1–12, parallel to Mosiah 14:1–12)

May we too set our faces like flints and bear our own powerful witnesses of Christ as Isaiah has done, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

Notes

1. I note the help of many who have shaped my thinking on this subject, particularly Donald W. Parry. He and my Salt Lake colleague Hoyt Brewster have been more than generous in sharing ideas, refining points of view, and helping me select salient elements for this paper from the near-endless array of options and possibilities inherent in such a topic.

2. Monte S. Nyman, *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 7.

3. Bruce R. McConkie, "The Keys of Understanding Isaiah," *Ensign* (October 1973): 78, 81.

4. Church Educational System Symposium, August 9, 1994.

5. Dallin H. Oaks, "Scripture Reading and Revelation," *Ensign* (January 1995): 7–9.

6. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 392.

7. *Ibid.*, 219.

8. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 1:12.

9. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 193–5.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 36.