



UNIT 8

THE ONCE FAITHFUL CITY

Isaiah 1:21-26

Isaiah shows how the once faithful city—Jerusalem—rebels against God and suffers the consequences of sin. That faithful city represents not only the modern-day equivalent of the covenant city of the Lord today, but also represents our own journey through descents and ascents.



SECTION 1: REBELLIOUS PRINCES

As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

~ Jehovah (Ezekiel 16:48-49)

Much of the symbolism in Isaiah shows two parallels demonstrating the polarity of relationships, both positive and negative, of characters in the last days. There are several references within Isaiah to different cities, and Isaiah narrates a story of how a once chosen city has fallen and afterward will be cleansed and renewed. Yet remember, this is not a historical journey of a city, but a symbolic spiritual journey of its people. Cities in Isaiah's writings represent nations or groups of people. Only on occasion does Isaiah literally mean an actual geographic city.

#1—THE CITY BECOMES A HARLOT

Isaiah laments how the holy city—that place which should be most holy to God, where the law and word of God should originate—has corrupted itself. Zion and Jerusalem both represent the Lord's holy city in Isaiah's writings. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3). Though two separate locations, they are one in heart, mind, and purpose, or at least should be.

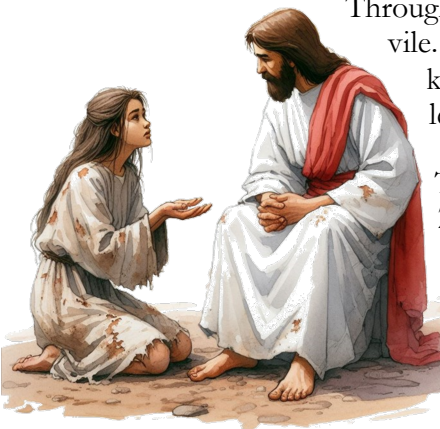
Zion as a physical city has yet to be erected upon the earth. Symbolically, Jerusalem represents that holy city where the covenant people of God have spiritual headquarters, whether overseas in ancient Israel or closer to home in our day. The spiritual headquarters of God's covenant people today is in America where the Lord made a new covenant with those who have received his gospel. Do we not call ourselves Zion and the covenant people of God? In a very real sense the Lord is speaking of us, as well as our distant cousins in Jerusalem, when he laments, "How the faithful city is become a harlot" (Isaiah 1:21).

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Isaiah 1:21-26
- Isaiah 47:7-9
- Isaiah 49:13-19
- Isaiah 54:4-6
- Isaiah 57:7-9
- Isaiah 61:10
- Hosea 1:2-9
- Hosea 2:1-20
- Ezekiel 16:23-63
- Revelation 21:9-14

Throughout Isaiah's writings, certain cities are personified as women, both virtuous and vile. One is the city or nation Babylon described by Isaiah as a haughty "lady of kingdoms," who after she falls from grace will become both widowed and childless (see Isaiah 47:5-9).

Two are considered brides to the Lord, Zion and Jerusalem. Isaiah speaks of Zion as the forsaken wife, and the wife that will once again be remembered (see Isaiah 54 and 49:13-21). He refers to a once faithful Jerusalem as the fair wife that became a harlot, but who will eventually be cleansed and then redeemed again (see Isaiah 1:21, 26 and 57:5-9). It is in this perspective that the Lord gives his glaring accusation, "How is the faithful city become a harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers" (Isaiah 1:21).



How do we interpret this idea in our day? Jesus prophesied the Gentiles in America will receive the fulness of his gospel after they scattered many of the house of Israel. If they received it, they would be counted among his people of the house of Israel (see 3 Nephi 21:6). Yet, he continued to prophesy that they would ultimately rebel against the fulness of the gospel, after which he would remember his covenant he made with Israel (see 3 Nephi 20:27-29).

The house of Israel are those brides that went wayward, were scattered, and then subdued. But in time, Jehovah promised he would remember his covenant with them and restore them as in Zenos' allegory of the olive trees (see Jacob 5).



QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Israel and then Jerusalem anciently fell from God's grace because of their wickedness. How does our nation and churches compare in to those anciently?
2. How has the Gentile church and nation received and then rebelled against the fulness of the gospel of Christ?
3. What will it take for our "holy city" to be restored again to God?
4. What is your role in that return and restoration?

#2—SYMBOLISM IN WINE

One of the characteristics of Isaiah’s writings is his abundant use of symbolism to establish the meaning behind his prophecy. He uses many symbols to typify men and women including trees, stones, precious metals, animals, tools, etc. With each instance, he brings to light an aspect of human character and brightens our understanding of his intricate story as well as depicting types and shadows of future characters or events in his end-time prophecy.

Up to this point, we have seen Isaiah’s use of symbols in the form of people, places, numbers, animals, and body parts. Some additional symbols we will see in Isaiah’s description of our rebellion from God are types liquids and elements, such as wine and water, as well as silver and dross.

Isaiah laments that the faithful city—Jerusalem, or its symbolic equivalent in our day—has fallen so far from God’s grace that it has become a prostitute and is full of murderers (see Isaiah 1:21). As a symbolic representation of the spiritual decline of Israel, Isaiah symbolically compares our leaders to silver and our doctrines to wine. Notice below how he uses poetic pentameter to draw these parallel links. The “silver” and “wine” link and reflect the “princes,” from the Hebrew word שַׂר | sār. This word also means *ruler* or *noble*, but it can also be translated as *leader*, *commander*, or *chief*.

*Thy silver is become dross,
thy wine mixed with water;
Thy princes are rebellious,
and companions of thieves;
everyone loveth gifts,
and followeth after rewards*

WINE MIXED WITH WATER

Wine can have several symbolic meanings in Isaiah’s writings. Isaiah uses six different Hebrew words that translated into the English word “wine.” In the passage above, the Hebrew word is טָבַח | sō’-ve, having a connotation of carousal. It is the only time Isaiah uses this word in his book, and therefore we cannot compare it to other uses to determine its meaning. But we can use the poetic pentameter as a guide.

In the poetic pentameter above, silver, wine, princes, and companions appear to link. Dross, water, rebellion, and thieves also appear to link. In this instance, water dilutes the wine just as the dross contaminates the silver. Looking at the interchange of poetic linking, we can see that the princes are silver, and their rebellion is the dross. It is possible then to say the wine diluted by water is comparable to their intermingled companionship with thieves. In this case, the wine, which should be pure like the silver, is diluted because of the companionship that those rulers keep. They do not keep themselves pure and holy, but instead mingle with those that dilute them.



Another possible interpretation of the symbol wine is are doctrines. This dilution of wine with water could be referring to the changes of doctrine, meaning our doctrine loses its purity and potency as we mix it with the philosophies of man and the beliefs and patterns of Babylon. In other places, the word “wine” is mentioned as strong drinks and strong wines (see Isaiah 28) which can similarly represent an adulteration of our doctrines.

OTHER USES OF טָבַח | SŌ’-VE

- Deuteronomy 21:20 — “Drunkard”
- Hosea 4:18 — “Drink”
- Isaiah 1:22 — “Wine”
- Nahum 1:10 — “Drunkards”

ISAIAH’S VARIANTS OF WINE

In addition to the wine reviewed earlier, he also mentions the following wines:

1. “New wine” (תִּירוֹשׁ | tē-rōsh’) made from the current vintage, sometimes unfermented (see Isaiah 24:7 and 65:8).
2. The very intoxicating “sweet wine” (עֲסֵס | ä-sēs’) (see Isaiah 49:26).
3. “Red wine” (חֶמֶד | hē’-med) used in reference to purity (see Isaiah 27:2).
4. The dregs or “wine on the lees” (שֶׁמַּרְיִם | shē-mä’-rēm) the Lord uses for his end-time feast (see Isaiah 25:6).
5. Most other references to wine (יַיִן | yä’-yēn) refer to wines and drunkenness, sometimes used in positive connotations and sometimes used negatively.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. How would you interpret the meaning of the word “wine” in the passage on the previous page?
2. As you investigate all the other uses of wine, what does Isaiah mean with each use of these symbols? (*Remember to link the Hebrew words, not the English.*)
3. What would the “wine” look like if it were not diluted with water and how does that relate to you?



NOTES

#3—APATHY: THE SIN OF OUR DAY

The princes of the people—our leaders—are condemned because we do not “do well”, but rather “do evil” (1:16-17). The Lord is not speaking about someone else. He is directly accusing our people—our nation and churches—for abandoning our own poor and our needy. As Ezekiel stated, this was one of the major transgressions of Sodom and Gomorrah. “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49). No wonder God connects us to those ancient people. No wonder he says there is blood on our hands.

Our leaders and our people are more than willing to take bribes and receive “gifts” to further their own agendas. We see this profusely with both civic and religious leaders. Churches use billions of dollars of members’ tithing payments to invest in stocks, buy property and businesses, and beautify their temples and worship halls, instead of using it to serve the poor and needy. They spend exorbitant amounts of money on their own aggrandization while the poor around us struggle to feed themselves.

One leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said, “If a destitute family is faced with the decision of paying their tithing or eating, they should pay their tithing. The bishop can help them with their food and other basic needs until they become self-reliant.”¹ Yet when you observe how this church uses those tithing funds, very little returns to the poor while the church gets rich. Isaiah addressed this specifically stating, “The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses” (Isaiah 3:14).

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Exodus 23:10-13
- Deuteronomy 15:1-11
- Proverbs 14:31
- Isaiah 3:11-15
- Isaiah 10:1-4
- Isaiah 25:1-6
- Isaiah 32:5-8
- Micah 3:1-12



In Malachi, the Lord asks, “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings” (Malachi 3:8). The word “rob” in this passage comes from the Hebrew word קָבַע | *kā-vā’* which literally means *to cover* and more accurately should be translated as “defraud.”

So, perhaps what God is really asking is, *Will a man defraud God? Yet ye have defrauded me. But ye say, How have we defrauded thee? In the way we use tithes and offerings.* Remember, he is specifically speaking to the covenant sons and daughters of God in our day.

How do we personally serve the poor? It is easy to simply write a check or hand some cash to our church leaders for them to serve the poor for us. Then we say to ourselves, It’s not my fault if they abused my tithing funds. I was just supposed to pay it, not be responsible for it. And meanwhile, our poor and needy continue to be unserved or un-

1. Robbins, Lynn G. “Tithing—A Commandment Even for the Destitute.” *General Conference Report*, April 2005.



QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What is your obligation to the poor and need? How are you serving the widows and the orphans?
2. Introspectively look at yourself. Are you apathetic toward the poor and needy? If so, what do you need to do to change?
3. How can you avoid “defrauding” God? How can you use your tithing funds to best benefit God’s children?

deserved. People on the streets beg for food, families struggle to pay the basic necessities of life, and children go hungry everyday while we pat ourselves on the back because we paid a full tithe and have a temple recommend in our pockets.

Though there are good church and community programs to help the poor and needy, do we absolve ourselves of responsibility of helping while others serve them in our behalf? Are we doing enough, or do we just look the other way? One of the great sins of our day is apathy, an expectation that someone else will take care of them.

James tells us that “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the vices of the world” (James 1:27).

NOTES

SECTION 2: RESTORING OUR JUDGES

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

~ Malachi (Malachi 3:2-3)

The story of Isaiah is filled with hope and promise. Though Jerusalem falls from the grace of God, the Lord continually attempts to bring his covenant children back into his presence. The Lord said to Israel, “Ye have sold yourselves for naught; and ye shall be redeemed without money” (Isaiah 52:3). He also pleads that we will change our hearts and repent. “Let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isaiah 43:25). To make this transition from wickedness to righteousness, we need to go through some refinement and purification.

#1—ASCENDING THROUGH REFINEMENT

Throughout Isaiah’s narrative, he uses elements as symbols to describe different characteristics, actions, or levels of spirituality. Some elements are tangible, include silver and gold. It also includes the dross and different alloys, stones (both precious and plain), and wood. In the intangible realm of elements, he uses fire, flames, sparks, and dust, among other things. As we view the symbolic use of these elements, we see how people change through the refinement process of trial and tribulation.

In the end days, after the great tribulations of the second coming, Isaiah will show how those who are left will be elevated from one spiritual state to another through that refinement. “For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron” (Isaiah 60:17). Though in reality, brass cannot become gold, nor iron silver, etc., in the imagery created by Isaiah, those who were spiritually brass will become gold, iron will become silver, wood brass, and stones iron. It is a beautiful process of transfiguration and refinement.

REFINING SILVER

The task of refining silver is an arduous and careful process. The silver must be heated to a molten state and kept at a consistent temperature. During that liquified state, impurities rise out of the silver. These are skimmed off the top and discarded. The impurities that separate out of the silver are called dross. They are a mixture of various alloys. They have no use and are discarded. This process is repeated as often as needed until no impurities are found.

In Isaiah’s vision, he sees those who should be silver, who have become impure. They are refined through a similar spiritual process. The dross, our impurities and rebellion from God, must be purged out of ourselves, our churches, and our nation before we are clean before the Lord.

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Psalms 66:8-10
- Proverbs 25:4-5
- Isaiah 52:11-12
- Daniel 11:35
- Ougou 1:69-70 (*Mentimah Archives*)
- Zechariah 13:8-9
- Malachi 3:2-3
- Alma 34:29



QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. How do you symbolically interpret Isaiah's use of silver?
2. Who are the silver in our nation and churches and how have they become impure before God?
3. Looking introspectively, how pure are you before God?
4. What does the refinement process look like for you?

NOTES

SOME SYMBOLISM OF ELEMENTS

DROSS

The word dross (דֹּרֵס | sēg) appears in the Old Testament only eight times, and twice in Isaiah’s writings. It is always mentioned in reference to wickedness. The book of Proverbs has a couplet that links dross with wickedness. “Take away the **dross** from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness” (Proverbs 25:4-5).

In Isaiah’s writings, dross is almost always coupled with the refining of silver. Isaiah uses the idea in Proverbs to portray how the Lord will establish his righteous people by purging out the dross. “And I will turn my hand upon thee; and purely purge away thy **dross**, and take away all thy tin” (Isaiah 1:25). Ezekiel describes some of the alloys considered as dross, which includes brass, tin, iron, and lead (see Ezekiel 22:18-20). Brass, tin, and iron are all used by Isaiah to represent impure or wicked people with few exception.

SILVER & GOLD

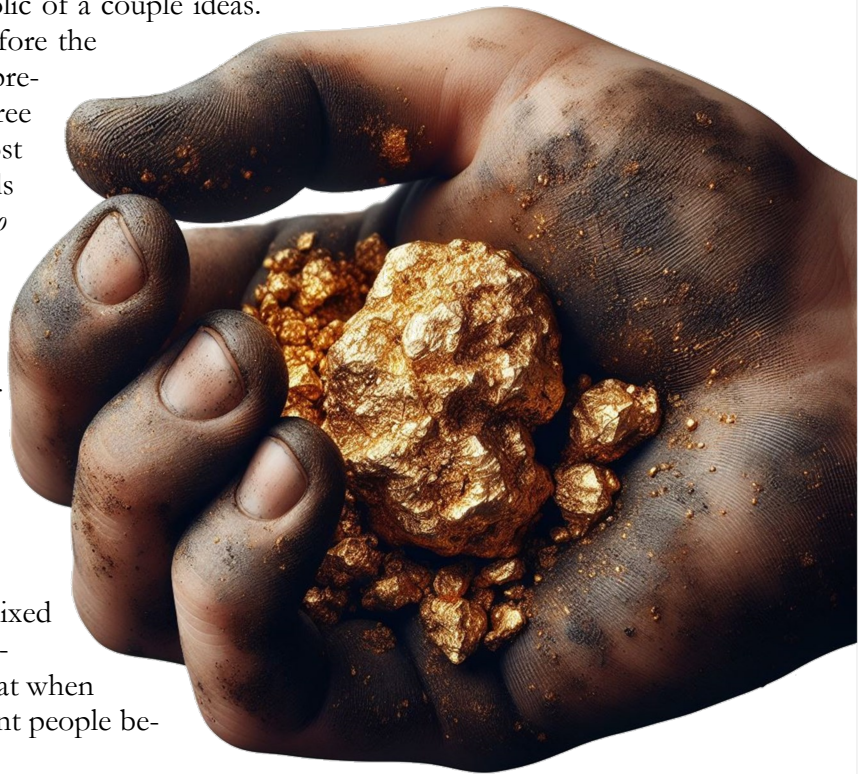
As a precious metal, silver and gold inherently hold value, figuratively and literally. Silver along with gold is used monetarily. The word used for silver (כֶּסֶף | ke’-sef) also can be translated as “money” and is often used interchangeably in Hebrew. “For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for naught; and ye shall be redeemed without **money**” (Isaiah 52:3).

In Isaiah’s writings, silver and gold are symbolic of a couple ideas.

The first is the concept of becoming pure before the Lord. Silver and gold that has been refined represents uprightness and purity. Isaiah uses three different words to describe gold. For the most refined forms of gold, he uses the words פָּז | pāz, derived from a root word meaning *to refine* (specifically gold), and כֶּתֶם | ke’-them, a pure chunk of raw mined gold. In the last days, God will “make a man more precious than **fine gold** (פָּז | pāz); even a man than the **golden wedge** (כֶּתֶם | ke’-them) of Ophir” (Isaiah 13:12).

However, these precious metals that are impure or have other alloys intermixed within them represent wickedness or rebellion from God. “Thy **silver** is become dross, thy wine mixed with water” (Isaiah 1:22). When the dross is removed, the silver becomes pure, suggesting that when the wicked are removed the remaining covenant people become subsequently are more refined.

The second concept is the precious things we revere more than God. Sometimes that is money, and sometimes it is our idols. “Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of **silver**, and the ornament of thy molten images of **gold**” (Isaiah 30:22). Note the idols of gold and silver mentioned here—and throughout Isaiah—are often in the image of something or someone. In this symbolic context, they refer to those people we idolize, the elite of the world, whether academic elites, politicians, spiritual leaders, celebrities, or others. In the last days, we will not regard these idols as precious any longer. Our loyalty will change to the Lord. “For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of **silver**, and his idols of **gold**” (Isaiah 31:7).



When the Lord establishes Zion, those of lesser spiritual caliber will be elevated to a higher spiritual level. “For brass I will bring **gold**, and for iron I will bring **silver**, and for wood brass, and for stones iron” (Isaiah 60:17).

IRON

Iron is described by Ezekiel as one of the alloys composing dross (see Ezekiel 22:18-20). Isaiah uses this metal as a symbol of wicked stubbornness. “Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an **iron** (בַּרְזֶל | bār-zel’) sinew, and thy brow brass” (Isaiah 48:4).

Isaiah also uses this word to symbolize the spiritual progression of an individual as the Lord comes again. “For brass I will bring gold, and for **iron** I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones **iron**; I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness” (Isaiah 60:17). Those who were iron will become silver, and those who were stones will spiritually elevate to iron.

Another symbol that Isaiah uses for Iron is in reference to the end-time Assyrian tyrant. Isaiah uses a handful of tools to symbolize the Assyrian including rods, saws, and axes. Though בַּרְזֶל | bār-zel’ means *iron*, it can also mean any tool fashioned from iron. In this case, a tool that cuts down trees. “And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with **iron**, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one” (Isaiah 10:34).

FIRE/FLAME

Fire is used symbolically by Isaiah with multiple interpretations. God has often symbolized his Glory in the form of fire. Recall that Moses spoke to God through a burning bush. Later, the children of Israel were led in the nighttime through the wilderness by a pillar of fire. In reference to that event, Isaiah uses it as an example when he prophesies that in the last days a remnant would be protected by “a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming **fire** (אֵשׁ | āsh) by night” (Isaiah 4:4). Lehi reportedly saw a pillar of fire when he was called to his ministry, as have others (see 1 Nephi 1:6). The Lamanites prison guards were surrounded by fire as they repented (see Helaman 5). These are only a few of the examples in scripture.

In Isaiah’s writings, fire can also represent a destroying (or sometimes even purifying) force. It often refers to the wrath or judgement of God against those who should have repented but did not. To punish the wicked, God uses other wicked nations and people. Isaiah symbolizes this in his use of historical precedent through the Assyrian tyrant or the antichrist and his armies. “For, behold, the Lord will come with **fire**, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of **fire**. For by **fire** and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many” (Isaiah 66:15-16).



In contrast, the Lord also refers to his righteous end-time servant and the righteous hosts of Israel as fire. These servants are sent against the antichrist after the Lord has chastened his rebellious covenant sons and daughters. “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 briers in one day” (Isaiah 10:17). Thorns and briers are also symbols of a wicked and ferocious people.

#2—THE GOVERNANCE OF GOD

When Jerusalem is once again restored, Isaiah says it is because the Lord “will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning” (Isaiah 1:26). Isaiah describes our plight stating that “they who lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths” (Isaiah 3:12). The people should be able to trust their leaders, but their leaders cause them to stray from the Lord’s path. Though each man or woman is accountable for their own decisions, those leaders who deceive and misdirect their followers will bear the sins of those who they should have led rightly. Those judges will be removed from the people and be replaced by leaders who will guide people to Christ.

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

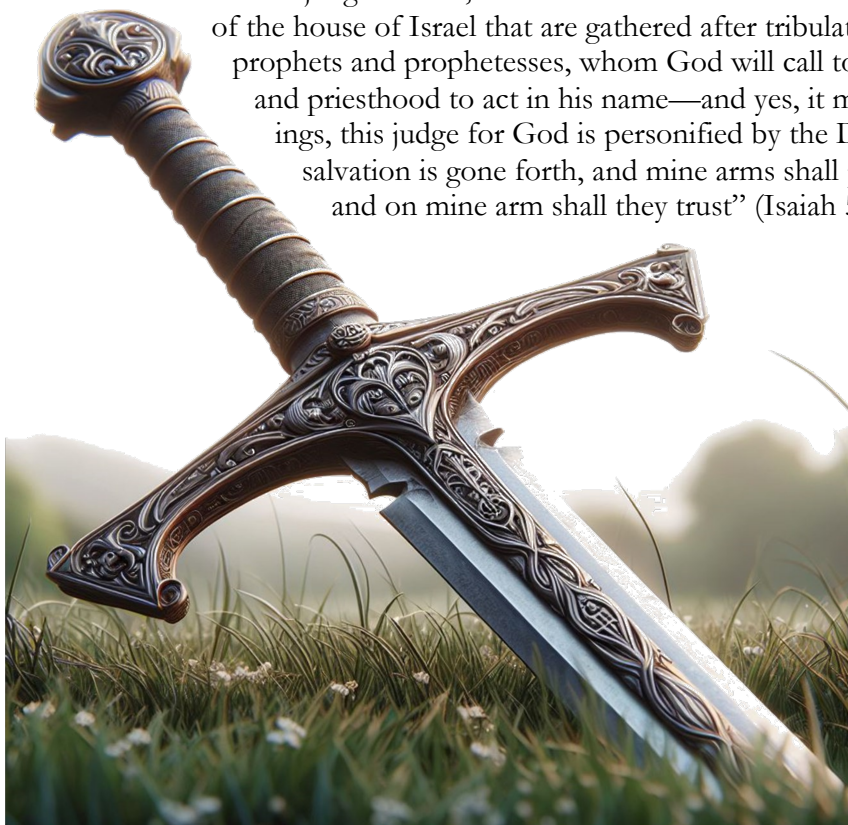
- Judges 2:16-19
- Isaiah 1:17, 23-26
- Isaiah 3:1-8
- Isaiah 9:6-7
- Isaiah 11:1-4
- Isaiah 33:20-22
- Isaiah 41:2-4
- Alma 13:1-12

THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL

The Lord states that he will restore his judges like he had in the beginning (or at least shortly after Moses was taken by God). Interestingly, the Hebrew word *judge* (שֹׁפֵט | shā-fāt') in Isaiah 1:26 is the same word used in Isaiah 1:17 when he instructs us to “do well” by judging the fatherless. Again in Isaiah 1:23, Isaiah says that the princes “judge not the fatherless.” Isaiah gives us a look at what those judges and counselors who are restored will be like—and what they won’t be like.

There were twelve judges in ancient Israel spanning over 400 years that were raised by the Lord to deliver Israel out of trouble. These include Othniel who guided the people after the death of Joshua until Samuel, the boy prophet who judged the people prior to the reign of king Saul. These were men and women, prophets or prophetesses, chosen by God to rule over the people of Israel. Each came at a desperate time when Israel became stuck in trouble from which they could not escape. Each delivered Israel and became judges over the people.

Like those judges of old, in the future God will choose stewards to manage the affairs of the remnant of the house of Israel that are gathered after tribulation. These will be priest and priestesses, prophets and prophetesses, whom God will call to judge the people. He will give them authority and priesthood to act in his name—and yes, it may be women as well as men. In Isaiah’s writings, this judge for God is personified by the Davidic servant. “My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust” (Isaiah 51:5).



JUDGES OF ISRAEL

1. Othniel – Judges 3:10-11
2. Ehud – Judges 3:12-30
3. Shagmar – Judges 3:31
4. Deborah – Judges 4-5
5. Gideon – Judges 6-8
6. Abimelech – Judges 9
7. Tola and Yair – Judges 10:1-5
8. Jephthah – Judges 10:17-12:7
9. Ibzan, Elon & Abdon – Judges 12:8-15
10. Samson – Judges 13-16
11. Eli – Samuel 1:9, 4:18
12. Samuel – 1 Samuel 7:17



QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. How does the priesthood of God influence the governance of God's kingdom?
2. How does someone receive the priesthood of God?
3. How can you personally use God's priesthood authority to further his work?

NOTES

UNIT NOTES

