



ISAIAH

A PROPHET'S PROPHET

VOLUME 2

ROBERT L. MILLER

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ISAIAH CHAPTER 32

The Promise of Peace



This chapter focuses on the reign of Jesus Christ and the effects this rule will have on those He rules over.

32:1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

The king spoken of here is undoubtedly Christ, and the “princes” are the judges in Israel who will rule and judge in Zion under the law of consecration and during the Millennium (see D&C 58:17–22).

32:2 And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

“A Man” refers to the king mentioned above, or Jesus Christ. Isaiah provides four metaphors to indicate the Lord’s eternal preservation of the Saints: “hiding place” (or shelter), “covert” (covering), “rivers of water,” and “shadow of a great rock.” The “man” Christ will be a protection from the winds and whirlwinds of our lives, a covering of comfort for our sins, sustaining cool and clear water flowing into our lives, and a solid place where we can build. In essence, Isaiah is teaching that Christ helps us in all aspects of our lives.

32:3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.

32:4 The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.

Rash (Heb. *mâhar*)—hurried, anxious.

Stammerers (Heb. *‘illêg*)—speaking inarticulately on divine things.

Isaiah uses five ways in which we perceive the world improves when we allow Christ to be our king. Our spiritual eyes will see truth and our ears will hear the word of God and we will hearken (or act upon) to it. If we are feeling “rash” (anxious or hurried), Christ’s rule allows

us to understand the most important knowledge that brings peace and comfort to our hearts. As a result, what we speak will be changed and improved. We will speak plainly in a way that builds up those around us.

32:5 The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful.

Vile (Heb. *nâbâl*)—stupid, wicked.

Liberal (Heb. *nâdîyb*)—prince, noble.

Churl (Heb. *kîylay*)—scoundrel, knave.

Bountiful (Heb. *shôwa'*)—independent, noble, generous.

The stupid or wicked person will no longer be called noble or a prince. Neither will the scoundrel be seen as generous. Christ allows us to see others as they really are, and more importantly, to see ourselves as who we not only are, but what we can become.

A POEM ABOUT THE WICKED, THE SCOUNDREL AND THE NOBLE

The next three verses are one poem with three stanzas. Each successive stanza is a little shorter than the preceding stanza. The last stanza is simple and emphasizes the effects of nobility.

32:6 For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

Villany (Heb. *n^ebâlâh*)—obscenity or foolishness.

The wicked speak of foolishness and wickedness and their words are a reflection of the desire of their hearts. They speak against God and those whom they should be caring for—the hungry. The effect they have on others is to drain their soul of spiritual vitality.

32:7 The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.

A scoundrel (churl) is a dishonest person. They are dishonest with others and with themselves. Their dishonesty seeks only to enrich themselves at the expense of anyone else. Their words tear down the poor and needy.

32:8 But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.

The effect of nobility on others is nobility. They raise others to their personal and spiritual standards.

32:9 Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto

my speech.

The women who continue in their daily activities without concern for the calamity about to befall them represent the inhabitants of the Israelite or Judean cities, male and female, who are at ease and ignore the prophets' warnings of impending doom.

32:10 Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come.

The vintage is the grape crop which Isaiah foretells will fail. They, like the crop of grapes “shall not come” or in other words—“will come to nothing.”

32:11 Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones: strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins.

The phrases “strip you” and “make you bare” represent enslavement and captivity (see Isaiah 20:2–3). By the use of these symbols, Isaiah warns Israel of what the future holds for them.

32:12 They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.

Not only will the crops fail in the time of their impending doom, but the vines and fields will also be destroyed.

ISRAEL SHALL BE A DESOLATION UNTIL THE MESSIAH BEGINS THE PREPARATION FOR HIS RETURN

32:13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briars; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city:

“According to Snaith, the ‘thorn’ could grow anywhere but the ‘briar’ belongs definitely to the wasteland” (Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 260). This indicates that the coming desolation will bring cultivated fields into a state of disarray and that they will become a wasteland. Elder Orson Pratt read verses 13–20 and then taught that after the nation of Israel is destroyed, it will remain in same condition until Christ began His preparation for the Second Coming. He taught:

It is very evident from these predictions of the Prophet Isaiah, that he, by that spirit which opens the future, was able to see the calamities that would come upon the house of Israel, and not only upon the people, but also upon the Promised Land, the land of Canaan, now called Palestine. A curse was predicted upon that land, that instead of bringing forth those things that were necessary to sustain a people, it should bring forth briars and thorns. We are also told that this desolation should remain for a long period, until the Spirit should be poured out from on high, until, in the purposes of the Most High, he should pour out his Spirit, and that would produce a great change upon that land, but until that time it was to be desolate. Not the desolation of seventy years, as happened to Israel in their Babylonish captivity,

which only comprised about one generation, but the desolations were to be for many generations, during which that land was to lie uncultivated. The latter rains were to be withheld, and the land was to become dry and parched up, bringing forth thorns and briars, and this was to continue until the Lord poured out his Spirit from on high.

It seems, then, that the Lord had a particular set time in his own mind, when he would again pour out his Spirit from on high upon his people, and more especially upon the house of Israel; and when that time arrives, there will not only be a great moral reformation among the people, but we are told that the revolution will extend to the land also, for the Prophet says here, that when the Spirit is poured out from on high, the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be counted for a forest. (*Journal of Discourses*, 144)

32:14 Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a jony of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;

32:15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

The “women that are at ease” (32:9, 14) will experience calamity and mourn over the loss of their freedom and their land for a very long time. This spiritual wasteland of thorns and briars will continue until the Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon them. The Spirit of God makes a wasteland into a fruitful field that extends past the horizon. It leads us out of the wilderness into the fruitful garden of God.

32:16 Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

In verse 1 of this chapter, the righteous king reigned in righteousness and was a reference to Christ. Now after the Spirit has been poured out, He comes to reign! His righteousness will remain in a Messianic millennial world.

32:17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

This is one of the most powerful verses in all of the book of Isaiah that is sometimes overlooked. President Eyring taught:

[O]ne of the passages in Isaiah which you may sometimes pass by too quickly because you think you won’t understand it, makes perfect sense: “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isaiah 32:17).

But you might well say, “But do I have to wait until I am perfect and the people around me are perfect before I can live in peace?” I suppose the answer is yes if you mean to live in perfect peace. But there is a much happier answer, and a true one. It is this: We are promised peace in this life before we are perfect. (Eyring, “Blessed

are the Peacemakers”)

This principle was also taught to the prophet Joseph Smith in Jackson County, Missouri, on August 7, 1831. The Lord said to Joseph: “But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:23). President Marion G. Romney observed this peace is obtainable in this life and is a taste of the peace that is in store for righteous Saints. He said: “The fullness of eternal life is not attainable in mortality, but the peace which is its harbinger and which comes as a result of making one’s calling and election sure is attainable in this life” (Romney, in Conference Report, October 1965).

32:18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;

Zion is called “a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God” (D&C 45:66). Orson Pratt applied Isaiah 32:17–19 to the Saints when they sought relief from persecution in the Rocky Mountains (see *Journal of Discourses*, 18:148–49).

32:19 When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.

32:20 Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.

The NIV translation of verses 19–20 is: “Though hail flattens the forest and the city is leveled completely, how blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free.”

Hail is one of the Lord’s judgments upon the wicked in the last days (see D&C 29:16–17). Hail in this verse represents all of God’s judgments on the wicked. The “forest” and the “city” probably refer to the “proud and the wicked.” These verses mean that although the homes and crops of the wicked are destroyed, Zion will enjoy peace and security, planting crops in an almost carefree manner and letting their cattle graze without fear.

Orson Pratt quoted these verses in August 1875 and said that they applied to Zion in the last days—specifically when the Saints had moved to Utah. He noted:

Will they have any capital city when they get up into the mountain desert? O, yes. Isaiah says here—“When it shall hail, coming down on the forest, the city shall be low in a low place.” How often have I thought of this since we laid out this great city, twenty eight years ago! How often have this people reflected in their meditations upon the fulfillment of this prophecy! They have seen, on this eastern range of mountains and on the range of mountains to the west of this valley, snow and storms pelting down with great fury, as though winter in all its rigor and ferocity had overtaken the mountain territory, and at the same time, here, “low in a low place,” was a city, organized at the very base of these mountains, enjoying all the blessings of a spring temperature, the blessings of a temperature not sufficient to cut off our vegetation. What a contrast! “When it shall hail, coming down on the forest,

the city shall be low in a low place.” That could not be Jerusalem, no such contrast in the land of Palestine round about Jerusalem! It had reference to the latter-day Zion, the Zion of the mountains. (*Journal of Discourses*, 18:149)

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