
Isaiah 55

This has got to be one of my absolutely favorite chapters in Isaiah. All are invited to come unto Christ, partake of the living and cleansing waters of the Gospel, and be healed by the atoning sacrifice of our Redeemer. If we turn unto Christ, He will pay the price for us, else, we will have to suffer anguish untold. We are often hard in our judgment of others and of ourselves and assume that God will likewise treat us. Christ assures us that His ways are higher than ours and that He has His arms stretched out toward us and bids us come to Him. This earth will once again take upon herself her paradisiacal glory which she possessed while Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden.

vv. 1-5. Come and partake of the waters of the Gospel. Do not spend your efforts for things that do not lead to joy in this life and life eternal. Heed the invitation to partake of the Gospel and enter into the new and everlasting covenant. Christ is a witness to the people. Israel shall one day realize that many of dispersed Israel from the nations of the world have joined her in her love for the Lord.

1 ¶ HO, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

HO, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, for the second clause, “let him come and learn.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “HO! ye who are thirsting, come to water!” ¶ This is the same חוּ *Ho* or cheerful salutation we saw in ISAIAH 18. It is sometimes used as an exclamation of threat, also. Oswalt has: “*Ho* is the same word translated elsewhere as “Woe!” or “Alas!” . . . most [commentators suggest it is a] general call for attention. But even as such, its presence here along with the five imperatives in this verse gives a strong sense of urgency and importance to what follows.” Jennings well says: “[ISAIAH 55] begins with a cry of a ‘Ho!’ for now the glad tidings of what those sufferings have effected must go to the furthest bounds of human dwelling, and wherever there is a burdened, a sorrowing, a dissatisfied heart, there this silvery invitation is welcomed. Is it not beautifully appropriate that such a call should be broadcast with trumpet-strength that it may reach afar to all, awaken the attention of all? Thus the ‘Ho’ must not be overlooked.” Rashi, in Rosenberg, explains that חוּ can be an “expression of calling, inviting, and gathering.” ¶ Alexander interestingly notes (though he has a different perspective) that “some of the Fathers [see a]

reference to the water of baptism . . . in this verse.” It is interesting because in ISAIAH 48:1 we have that wording in the Book of Mormon (see 1Nephi 20:1, “and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, or *out of the waters of baptism*, who swear by the name of the Lord” emphasis added). ¶ Abarbanel, according to Rabbis Slotki-Rosenberg well suggest that the *thirst* is for the “word of God.” Barns says, “The word *thirst* often indicates intense *desire*.” Redak, in Rosenberg, explains that “just as the thirsty yearn for water, so does the soul yearn for Torah and wisdom . . .” In Amos 8:11, we read: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.” Ibn Ezra has: “With these words the Lord will address those who will then be desirous to accept the Law.” ¶ Ironside says: “If it were not for the truth set forth in chapter 53 of ISAIAH, there would be no possibility of this gracious invitation . . . So Isaiah, after having set forth so clearly the atoning death the Anointed of God was to die, called upon all needy, troubled souls to appropriate by faith the gracious provision thus depicted. His message to thirsty souls was identical with that proclaimed by the Lord Jesus at a later date (John 7:37),¹ and it is with a similar proclamation that the New Testament draws to a close (Revelation 22:17).² . . . We may well be reminded of our Lord’s words to the Samaritan woman, ‘Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but it . . . shall be in him a well [or fountain] of water springing up into everlasting life’ (John 4:14).” Jenour says: “These blessings [of the gospel covenant] are figuratively represented by the terms, *water*, *wine*, and *milk*; and those who are invited to partake of them are the *thirsty* . . .” ¶ *And he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And he that hath

¹ “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37).

² “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).

no silver, come, hear and learn.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And ye who have no money, come buy and eat.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓛ) has “and you that have no money make haste, buy, and eat.” Jenour notes: “They have *no money* . . . no merits to offer in exchange for the promised mercies. These therefore are offered freely; *without money*, &c. There is a peculiar emphasis in the original, which can scarcely be conveyed in a translation. It implies not only that the promised blessings are to be had *without* money, &c.; but that they *cannot* be had with it; ‘*not* for money nor for price.’ And that is because no one can say that the blessings have been merited. We are all beggars before the Lord. Kay has: “They must come (John 6:35, 45), and procure it; though it be given away *without price* (ISAIAH 52:3, ‘For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.’).” ¶ *Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “Come, hear and learn, without price and money, doctrine that is better than wine and milk.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Without money and without price, wine and the choicest bread.” ¶ The Talmud tradition (Seder Mo’ed, Ta’anith 7a; also see Seder Nezikin, Baba Kama 17a, 82a and so on) has: “Rabbi Hanina ben Ida said: Why are the words of the Torah likened unto water—as it is written, ‘Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye for water’? This is to teach you, just as water flows from a higher level to a lower, so too the words of the Torah endure only with him who is meekminded. Rabbi Oshaia said: Why are the words of the Torah likened unto these three liquids, water, wine and milk — as it is written, ‘Ho, everyone that thirsteth come ye for water’; and it is written, Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money, and without price? This is to teach you, just as these three liquids can only be preserved in the most inferior of vessels, so too the words of the Torah endure only with him who is meekminded” (Talmud, Soncino). Ibn Ezra asserts regarding וַיִּקְחֵם וַיִּשְׁתְּוּ: “Wine and milk are mentioned because the Law is compared with them.” Rashi, in Slotki-Rosenberg, suggests that “learning . . . is better than wine and milk.” Cowles has: “The central idea is, the best and most needful things for the body made the symbols of the best and most vital blessings for the soul. The abundance and freeness of the former represent the yet richer abundance and free ness of the latter.” As Wordsworth mentions: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). ¶ Elder Moses Thatcher shared: “. . . the standards of value are established by the cost of things received, and by this rule we know that no good thing has ever come into this world without having cost the equal of its value. Nor has any great thought or noble idea ever been introduced that

had not to fight its way inch by inch. Think of what the principles of the everlasting Gospel, that are freely given, has without money, without price, cost? Agony that caused the Son of God to sweat great drops of blood. And that being too little, He must needs be insulted, spat upon, scourged, adjudged to die . . . and finally He was ignominiously crucified by those whom He came to save. Humiliated, deprived of judgment and sacrificed, the Lamb of God descended beneath all things that He might arise above all things, leading captivity captive and giving gifts to men, while holding the keys of death, hell, and the grave.”³ Elder Jeffrey R. Holland inspiringly invited: “I do not know who in this vast audience today may need to hear the message of forgiveness inherent in this parable, but however late you think you are, however many chances you think you have missed, however many mistakes you feel you have made or talents you think you don’t have, or however far from home and family and God you feel you have traveled, I testify that you have not traveled beyond the reach of divine love. It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines. Whether you are not yet of our faith or were with us once and have not remained, there is nothing in either case that you have done that cannot be undone. There is no problem which you cannot overcome. There is no dream that in the unfolding of time and eternity cannot yet be realized. Even if you feel you are the lost and last laborer of the eleventh hour, the Lord of the vineyard still stands beckoning. ‘Come boldly [to] the throne of grace,’ and fall at the feet of the Holy One of Israel. Come and feast ‘without money and without price’ at the table of the Lord.”⁴

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for [that which is] not bread? and your labour for [that which] satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye [that which is] good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

✓ weigh

Wherefore do ye spend money for [that which is] not bread? The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “Wherefore do ye weigh out your silver for that which is not food?” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Why are you expending money.” The Hebrew for *spend money* literally means, according to the margin ||, to weight out money (or silver), thus “Why do ye weigh out silver?” or לָמָּה תִּשְׁקֹלוּ כֶסֶף.

³ Moses Thatcher, “The Speaker’s Pleasure, Etc.” *Journal of Discourses*, 26: 208b-209a, 13 April 1885.

⁴ Holland, Elder Jeffrey R., “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign*, May 2012, p. 31.

So also the Targum (Ⓣ). In Spanish we also use the word *silver, plata*, when speaking about money. For instance, do you have money? *¿Tienes plata?* Henderson explains: “to weigh, to weigh out money, in reference to the custom of weighing uncoined gold and silver in mercantile transactions, which anciently obtained, not only among the Hebrews, but among other nations; and still [Henderson’s book was printed in 1857] obtains in Turkey and other parts of the East.” As Wordsworth mentions: “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed” (John 6:27). ¶ *Not bread*, בְּלוֹא־לֶחֶם. Cowles explains: “‘No-bread’ as here used is a compound word, like ‘no-wood’ (ISAIAH 10:15), and ‘no-God’ and ‘no-spirit’ (ISAIAH 31:3), meaning the opposite of bread, *i.e.*, . . . whatever is not life-sustaining but life-destroying. The ‘no’ prefixed carries the sense beyond the mere negation of bread, over to the opposite idea.” It points to that which is no-life, that is, does not lead to exaltation. ¶ This verse is an invitation to not get distracted with poor choices in life. Ibn Ezra suggests this relates to the philosophies of men: “Wherefore will you labour in profane science.”⁵ Horsley speaks of the “the laborious researches of human *philosophy*.” Gill says it of those who “Lavish away time, opportunities, and strength, in reading and hearing false doctrine, which is not bread, but chaff; is not wholesome, does not nourish, but is harmful and destructive; eats as does a canker, instead of feeding and refreshing; such as the vain philosophy of the Gentiles, the traditions of the Jews, and the errors and heresies of false teachers.” ¶ *And your labour for [that which] satisfieth not?* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And your wealth (literally, ‘and that gotten by fatigue’) for that which satisfieth not?” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And labour for that which will not satisfy?” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓡ) has, “Doth not satisfy you?” instead of *satisfieth not?* Oswalt points us to Proverbs 9:5-6: “Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.” Skinner has: “. . . worldly life is a continual spending without lasting profit or satisfaction.” ¶ Elder Spencer J. Condie applied these words of Isaiah to our temporal occupations: “Happy is the man who can truthfully say: ‘I never went to work a day in my life—I have always enjoyed my job so much.’ More commonly we are likely to hear of fathers and mothers who love each other and their family so much that they do what it takes to support and sustain them. Occupational pursuits are seen as part of a greater plan, not as the means to immediate self-gratification. It

would be well to initially define the problem in terms of its eternal consequences for the family. Isaiah asked the provocative question in this regard: ‘Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?’”⁶ I was truly blessed in my lifetime to have occupations which I, for the most part, absolutely loved. I was fortunate enough to have jobs that permitted me plenty of time with my family, Church callings, and was fulfilling at the same time. Had I not been able to return to Chile, it would have been even harder to retire than it was. I think that whether a job is satisfying, is partly, dependent on our mindset. ¶ *Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye [that which is] good.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Hearken diligently to my Word, and ye shall eat that which is good.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Hearken to me and you shall eat good things.” Cowles says that instead of no-bread and that which does not satisfy, we here have a “repetition [in the original שְׁמַעוּ שְׁמוּעַ] expressing the earnestness of the call” to hearken. ¶ The Savior Himself taught: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matthew 6:19-20, also see 3Nephi 13:19-20). ¶ *And let your soul delight itself in fatness.* The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And your soul will be regaled with delicacies.” Instead of *fatness*, the Peshitta (Ⓢ) also has *delicacies*. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓡ) has, “And your soul shall be delighted in fatness.” Kimhi in Slotki-Rosenberg explains that fatness represents “spiritual satisfaction.” So also Cowles who explains: “‘Fatness’ represents the choicest spiritual good.” See notes on ISAIAH 25:6: “And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” This is also an invitation to the nations to come unto the *banquet of the Lord*. ¶ *Your soul*, נַפְשְׁכֶם. It is interesting here, to LDS, that regarding the soul, Oswalt explains that to the Hebrews, the soul: “It is not the ‘flesh’ or the ‘heart’ or the ‘spirit.’ In some ways it is the sum of all these [and then again of the use of נַפְשְׁכֶם in ISAIAH 55:3] Again, the use of ‘soul’ here is not in contrast to the body or the spirit. It is speaking about the fullest reality of human life.” The LDS definition is: “The scriptures speak of souls in three ways: (1) spirit beings, both premortal and postmortal (Alma 40:11–14; Abraham 3:23); (2) a spirit and a body united in mortality (Abraham 5:7); and (3) an immortal, resurrected person

⁵ Friedländer suggests that for Ibn Ezra *profane science* means “speculative philosophy, metaphysics.”

⁶ Spencer J. Condie, *Your Agency, Handle with Care*, p.78

whose spirit and body have become inseparably connected (Alma 40:23; D&C 88:15–16).”

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, [even] the sure mercies of David.

Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Incline your ear and receive *instruction of my law*, obey my Word and your soul shall be quickened.” The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “Incline your ears and follow in my paths; hearken to me and your soul shall live on good things.” *Your soul shall live* is an allusion to exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom of God. ¶ Elder Eduardo Gavarret invited: “You who are not yet members of the Church will receive this invitation through the voice of the missionaries with the words, ‘Will you read the Book of Mormon? Will you pray? Will you attend church? Will you follow the example of Jesus Christ and be baptized by those who have authority?’ How will you answer this invitation today? I invite you to listen to and accept the message by saying, ‘Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee!’”⁷ Then Elder Russell M. Nelson taught us to listen: “To all of God’s children, either able to hear or deaf to mortal sound, He offers this reward: ‘Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live.’ Your soul will be blessed as you learn to listen, then listen to learn from children, parents, partners, neighbors, and Church leaders, all of which will heighten capacity to hear counsel from on high. Carefully listen to learn from the Lord through the still small voice—the Holy Spirit—which leads to truth. Listen to learn by studying scriptures that record His holy mind and will. Listen to learn in prayer, for He will answer the humble who truly seek Him.”⁸ ¶ Slotki-Rosenberg point to the Targum (Ⓣ) in suggesting that inclining the ear to hear is intimately associated with obedience. Surely, the expression *come unto me*, is Christ’s frequent invitation to *turn* (שׁוּבוּ) from our ways and follow Him: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”

⁷ Gavarret, Elder Eduardo, “Yes, Lord, I Will Follow Thee,” *Ensign*, November 2014, p. 37. In that same talk I was struck by the story of 14 year old Norma—who would one day become his wife—as she felt prompted to stop adding coffee to her milk after hearing the missionaries speak of the Word of Wisdom. When my friend Randy Homrig shared with me that coffee was against the Word of Wisdom, the Spirit likewise prompted me to stop drinking it, long before I read the Book of Mormon and became baptized. These are examples of how the Spirit places a stamp of approval on the words we speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

⁸ Nelson, Elder Russell M., “Listen to Learn,” *Ensign*, May 1991, p. 22.

(Matthew 11:28). ¶ Ibn Ezra has: “That is, your soul shall live forever after the death of the body, or you will receive new life through Messiah, when you will return to the Divine Law.” Skinner has: “The condition imposed is simply the consent and submission of the heart to the divine will.” ¶ *And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, [even] the sure mercies of David.* The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “And I will make with you an everlasting covenant—the gracious promises to David which are faithful.” The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, for the second clause, “The faithful mercies of David.” Rawlinson points us to Hosea 2:18a, 19, where that Prophet speaks of this future covenant: “And in that day will I make a covenant for them . . . And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.” And one of my favorites, from Jeremiah’s prophecies: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:31-34). ¶ **New and Everlasting Covenant.** The LDS Guide to the Scriptures explains: “The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ (D&C 66:2). It is new every time it is revealed anew following a period of apostasy. It is everlasting in the sense that it is God’s covenant and has been enjoyed in every gospel dispensation where people have been willing to receive it. The new and everlasting covenant was revealed again to men on earth by Jesus Christ through the prophet Joseph Smith. It contains sacred ordinances administered by priesthood authority—such as baptism and temple marriage—that provide for man’s salvation, immortality, and eternal life. When people accept the gospel and promise to keep God’s commandments, God covenants to give them the blessings of his new and everlasting covenant.” ¶ Several exegetes do well in pointing us to some of the last words of David: “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow” (2Samuel 23:5). The *sure mercies of David*,

תְּסִדִּי יְהוָה, make reference to Christ’s invitation to come unto Him. This is the Second David or Jesus Christ. Henderson points us to Psalm 89:1-4: “I will sing of the *mercies of the LORD* [**תְּסִדִּי יְהוָה**] for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah” (emphasis added). Henderson explains: “The benefits, therefore, or mercies promised to David, were those of the everlasting reign of his Illustrious Descendant; and, as such, sure and permanent.” We can clearly see, also, that **תְּסִדִּי יְהוָה** is put for **תְּסִדִּי יְהוָה**, that is, the *tender mercies of David* stand for the *tender mercies of the Lord*. Ibn Ezra similarly observes: “It is also possible, that by ‘David’ in this verse Messiah is meant, who will be of the family of David.” Wordsworth well has: “I have appointed Christ, Who was in David, and came forth from him, and Who is called ‘David’ (by Jeremiah—30:9; Ezekiel—34:23; 37:24; Hosea—3:5) . . .” Rabbi Rosenberg also explains it of ‘the Messiah, a scion of David’s family . . .’ Cheyne has: “*The loving-kindnesses of David*” Not ‘the *mercies of David*’ (Auth. Vers.) . . . ‘Of David’ means ‘promised to David;’ ‘the loving-kindnesses of Jehovah’ is the more natural phrase, comp. Isaiah 63:7, Psalm 89:49, 107:43, Lamentation 3:22 (‘the loving-kindnesses of David’ occurs elsewhere only in 2Chronicles 6:42).” Cheyne offers some possibilities but prefers that proposed by Hengstenberg: “Hengstenberg thus admits that the historical covenant with David is primarily referred to, but, as the covenant extended to David’s seed, he maintains that it only attained complete fulfilment in the Messiah.”

4 Behold, I have given him [for] a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

Behold, I have given him [for] a witness to the people. The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “Behold, I have appointed him a prince, a king.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Behold for a testimony to nations I gave him.” Horsley correctly mentions that in both cases in ISAIAH 55:4, the word is *peoples* (also *nations*), **לְאֻמִּים, לְאֻמִּים**, from the root **אָמַן**. The Second David, or Messiah, has been given *for a witness to the people*. Cowles explains: “The word ‘witness’ contemplates the Messiah as testifying to the great truths of God, revealing them and confirming

them as true, even as he said of himself before Pilate; ‘I am a king,’ and my empire is that of truth. ‘To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,’ and so proves himself to be one of my subjects (John 18:37) . . . This descriptive term appears among the attributes of the Messiah in Revelation 1:5, and 3:14: ‘Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness;’ ‘the faithful and true Witness.’” ¶ *A leader and commander to the people*. The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “And a ruler over all the kingdoms.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “A chief and a lawgiver to nations.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓡ) has, “For a leader and a master to the Gentiles.” Cowles says: “. . . a ‘leader and commander to the people,’ requires us to refer it to the Messiah.” Brothers McConkie and Parry do well in point out that Christ was also known as the title “Lord of Sabaoth,” or “Lord of Hosts.”⁹ Barnes suggests a *lawgiver*. This immediately reminds us of, “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh [Christ] come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Genesis 49:10).

5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation [that] thou knowest not, and nations [that] knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Behold, thou shalt call a nation [that] thou knowest not. The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “Behold, a people which thou knowest not shall serve thee.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Nations which knew thee not will fly to thee.” ¶ “A nation that thou knowest not” cannot refer to Christ who intimately knows not only the nations, but each one of us. Instead, Israel is the focus of this verse. Because of the Messiah, even the Holy One of Israel, all the nations of the world will turn to Zion to receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This verse alludes to the theme in Isaiah 54:1 and 49:21. Judah will be surprised that she is not alone, but that her sister tribes of Israel also love the LORD. I believe that ISAIAH 55:5, then, speaks of Israel as she is restored back beginning with Ephraim and encompassing all the tribes until Judah. Few commentators agree with me. Rabbis Slotki-Rosenberg, representing the Jewish perspective, say, *thou*, “God is addressing Israel.” Skinner has, “*Thou (Israel) shalt call a nation &c.*” i.e. many a nation hitherto unknown to thee.” Wade has: “Israel, by its exceptional experiences and the evidence it supplied of the Lord’s supremacy over human fortunes, is destined to receive the homage

⁹ Joseph Fielding McConkie and Donald W. Parry, *A Guide to Scriptural Symbols*.

of the heathen, who will seek to attach themselves, as servants, to the favoured people of so potent a Deity (cf. 45:14, 49:7).” May I suggest it is not that Israel itself is the homage of the nations, but rather, the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is associated with Israel. ¶ *And nations [that] knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And a people which hath not known thee shall run to offer tribute unto thee.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “For the sake of the Lord thy God.” Baltzer says, “‘Your God’ here (אֱלֹהֶיךָ) corresponds to ‘my people’ (עַמִּי)” in ISAIAH 40:1. And not just there, but throughout the Scriptures when contemplating the Abrahamic Covenant. As we have said, this will happen through the publication of the Book of Mormon (see Ezekiel 37:15 ff., see especially 37:23b:

וְטַהַרְתִּי אוֹתָם וְהָיִי-לִי לְעָם וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם:
(לְאֱלֹהִים).

Leeser renders it: “. . . and I will cleanse them, and they shall be unto me for a people, and I will be to them for a God. The AV has: “. . . and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.” ¶ *And for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He hath glorified thee.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “The Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.” The Holy One of Israel has glorified Zion. All the nations of the earth will place their attention on the restored Church who sends out missionaries throughout the globe.

vv. 6-13. Seek the Lord in prayer. Turn unto the Lord who is ready to forgive. God’s thoughts are higher than man’s. God’s words will be fulfilled. Their joy when we repent and turn unto God. During the Millennium, the earth will take upon itself its paradisiacal glory. While I was first working on this chapter some weeks ago, I applied these words of Isaiah when speaking to a person who was combating feelings of unworthiness—I believe that we are only made *worthy* as Christ lends us of His and we apply the atoning sacrifice to our lives. I encouraged him to not only seek the Father in prayer, but to also expect guidance and answers from the Lord. Can someone who is unworthy be a partaker of revelation in order to improve his or her life? While it is true that the constant guide and companionship of the Holy Ghost is based on having been confirmed a member of the Church, having accepted and received the Holy Ghost and living righteously, may I suggest that the Holy Ghost may be imparted to others who do not meet all of these criteria? I believe the Book of Mormon has healing influences as the word brings us closer to Christ and that everyone who reads that book with a seeking heart can feel the Spirit. I was not a

member of the Church when the Holy Ghost bore a strong witness of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. I was not even seeking for the truth at the time. We must pray to the Father and be filled with confidence that the Lord will answer—He will let us know we have been heard and give guidance as needed. We must put aside the thought that we cannot pray to the Father because we are unrighteous. In April 1982 General Conference, Elder Gene R. Cook warned: “May I share a few of Satan’s cunning illusions which undermine spirituality. Satan, with an illusion, leads a man to puff himself up with pride to say, ‘I am my own man. I know the Lord lives, but he expects me to handle this particular matter on my own and not bother him with any details.’ Not being familiar with the scriptures, the man may not know that Satan teaches the world there is no God. But to the Saints he simply says, ‘There is a God, but he is only *generally* involved in your life. He would not *specifically* help you today.’ Or he teaches the world not to pray, but to the Saints he simply says, ‘Don’t pray now. You don’t feel like praying right now’ (see 2 Nephi 32:8–9.) The net effect is the same.” It is, then, an unrighteous thought for man to believe that he cannot approach God in prayer or seek help in repenting. Gladly, this can be corrected as we refuse to listen to that voice that teaches us not to pray. The Lord is there, with stretched out arms inviting, beckoning, pleading with us to come unto Him that He may bless and heal us. Indeed, He will *abundantly pardon*. Why does not the Lord heal us immediately of our unrighteous behavior? Indeed, His thoughts are not our thoughts, for His thoughts and His ways are higher than ours. I can testify that the Lord has reasons for what He does. His timing is truly perfect and He always keeps His promises. None of His promises go unfulfilled. In other words, His words *never return to Him void*, nor do they *fall to the ground* without being accomplished. If we put our trust in our Father, He will abundantly bless us. The day will come when we will burst out in joy and be filled with peace—that is, salvation. Even the trees of the fields will clap their hands in joy for us.

6 ¶ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Seek ye the fear of the Lord whilst ye are alive, supplicate before His presence whilst ye remain.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “Seek ye the Lord; and when you find him call upon him. And when he draweth near to you.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) has something like, “Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.” Cowles well says: “The call to ‘seek the Lord while yet he may be found’ irresistibly implies that this time is limited and may be

very short.” Elder Eyring taught: “As the risen Savior, He is this day and forever the Light of the World. It is He who invites us to come unto Him and serve Him, without delay. His encouragement to you and to me is this: ‘I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.’” In the same talk, Elder Eyring warned: “There is a danger in the word *someday* when what it means is ‘not this day.’”¹⁰ Elder Eyring also quotes Alma 34:33-34: “And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye *do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end*; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.” Rabbi Rosenberg points to Targum (ⴚ) suggesting that we need to call upon the Lord while we live, which is also the interpretation I have given the expression. Keith warns that otherwise, if we do not turn to the Lord, we might be one of the unwise virgins: “Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, *I know you not*. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 25:11-13, emphasis added). ¶ The Lord will likewise answer our prayers in the very instant, or before we have even finished our prayers if we live close to Him, and strive to live with by the Spirit. “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isaiah 65:24). Calvin has: “We ought to draw high consolation from being assured that it is not in vain for us to seek God. ‘Seek,’ says Christ, ‘and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened; ask, and it shall be given to you’ (Matthew 7:7).” Nyman points us to the D&C: “And again, verily I say unto you, my friends, I leave these sayings with you to ponder in your hearts, with this commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall call upon me while I am near—Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 88:62-63). ¶ In addition to issues related to procrastination, there are other beautiful applications of this scripture. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “. . . there are no limitations placed upon any of us. Revelations are not reserved for a limited few or for those called to positions of importance in the Church. It

is not position in the Church that confers spiritual gifts. It is not being a bishop, a stake president, or an apostle that makes revelation and salvation available. These are high and holy callings which open the door to the privilege of great service among men. But it is not a call to a special office that opens the windows of revelation to a truth seeker. Rather it is personal righteousness; it is keeping the commandments; it is seeking the Lord while he may be found. God is no respecter of persons. He will give revelation to me and to you on the same terms and conditions.”¹¹ Elder Delbert L. Stapley quoted Isaiah 55:6-7 and counseled: “Man cannot afford to forsake God, depending solely upon his own intelligence. Such a course can only lead to utter confusion and ultimate destruction. Not knowing the mind, will, and purpose of an infinite God, man does not have, regardless of his advanced knowledge, the wisdom and judgment, nor the correct answers to solve all world problems. With implicit faith we must all turn to the God of our fathers in humility and sincere prayer for counsel and guidance.”¹² President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “Have we not forgotten to pray and to thank the Lord for His mercies and for His guidance in all that we do? If at times we have been requested to seek the help of the Lord in this great struggle which has deluged the world, have we prayed in the true spirit of prayer? What good does it do for us to petition the Lord, if we have no intention of keeping His commandments? Such praying is hollow mockery and an insult before the throne of grace. How dare we presume to expect a favorable answer if such is the case? ‘Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.’ So said Isaiah. But is not the Lord always near when we petition Him? Verily no! He has said, ‘They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble. In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me.’ If we draw near unto Him, He will draw near unto us and we will not be forsaken; but if we do not draw near to Him, we have no promise that He will answer us in our rebellion.”¹³ So also Elder Richard R. Lyman, who taught: “‘Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.’ Today is the time to call; tomorrow may be too late. O

¹⁰ Eyring, Elder Henry B., “This day.” April 2007 General Conference.

¹¹ McConkie, Elder Bruce R., “The Rock of Salvation,” *Conference Report*, October 1969, pp. 80–84.

¹² Delbert L. Stapley, “The Path to Eternal Glory,” *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 99.

¹³ Smith, President Joseph Fielding, “Blessed Is the Nation whose God Is the Lord,” *Conference Report*, April 1943, pp. 11–16.

youth of our nation, ‘Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near.’ Measured by this standard of praying, of family prayers and of secret prayers, how well do you and I measure up? . . . The following familiar words from the Holy Book explain briefly and clearly what I mean: ‘If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.’ If we are losing faith, if it seems our prayers are unanswered, let us reflect upon these words which the Lord has given to us in D&C 101: ‘In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me. They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble.’”¹⁴

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man[✓] his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.^{✓ ✓}

- ✓ the man of iniquity
- ✓ ✓ multiplicity to pardon

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: The Targum (Ⓒ) has, “the man of violence” for *unrighteous*. The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, “Let the wicked man forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his counsels.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓓ) has *unjust* instead of *unrighteous*. Certainly, *ways* and *thoughts* are intimately connected. We must forsake *the vain imaginations and thoughts of the heart* (see Moses 8:22). No wonder we read in Mosiah that we will be judged not only by our *deeds* and by our *words*, but also by our *thoughts* (Mosiah 4:30). It is easy to think that our thoughts are somehow disassociated from our words and acts. That perhaps we can entertain unkind feelings, and that this is somehow natural. It has now become clearer than ever to me that surely, “For as [man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). While we often excuse our unrighteous thoughts, we take these excuses even further when we give ourselves permission to say something that is unkind rather than tame our tongue. “I probably shouldn’t say this, but....” Indeed, it is a good thing when we can rule our tongue and not excuse ourselves for our thoughts, our words, and our deeds are inseparably connected. ¶ *And let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him.* The Targum (Ⓒ) has, for the first clause, “And let him return to the worship of the Lord.” The LXX (Ⓔ) reads,

“And turn to the Lord and he shall find mercy.” ¶ *And he return to Jehovah, וְיָשָׁב אֶל־יְהוָה*. Alexander has: “We are here taught that the seeking of Jehovah, and the calling upon him just enjoined, involve an abandonment of sin, and a *return* to righteousness of life. The imperative version of the futures is warranted, if not required, by the abbreviated form *יָשָׁב*.” ¶ *And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* The Targum (Ⓒ) has, for the first clause, “And unto the fear of our God.” The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, “For he will abundantly pardon your sins.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓓ) has, “And to our God: for he is bountiful to forgive.” Faussett points us to the margin ||, “Literally, ‘multiply to pardon.’” Cheyne points us to Jeremiah 29:11 (I also include verse 12), where we similarly find: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.” Our hearkening and inclining our ear to the Lord means that He also, will listen to us. “Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 1:3). Cowles well says that man may impute it to God that we are beyond forgiveness, but then “God enriches and intensifies his promise of mercy, saying, Judge not my mercy by your own, nor my readiness to pardon by yours. My ways of mercy are indefinitely more vast and glorious than those of mortals; my thoughts of compassion and love are infinitely richer than yours.” To this, Alexander adds a reminder from Matthew 19:26: “But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” ¶ President James E. Faust testified: “As Isaiah wrote, if we will return unto the Lord, ‘he will abundantly pardon.’ We are commanded to remember the singular events of the mediation, Crucifixion, and the Atonement by partaking of the sacrament weekly. In the spirit of the sacramental prayers, we partake of the bread and water in remembrance of the body and the blood sacrificed for us, and we are to remember Him and keep His commandments so that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. Our Redeemer took upon Himself all the sins, pains, infirmities, and sicknesses of all who have ever lived and will ever live. No one has ever suffered in any degree what He did. He knows our mortal trials by firsthand experience.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Elder Richard R. Lyman, General Conference, April 1934, pp. 111-112.

¹⁵ Faust, President James E., The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope, *Ensign* (CR), November 2001, p.18.

8 For my thoughts [are] not your thoughts, neither [are] your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

For my thoughts [are] not your thoughts. The LXX (6) reads, “For my counsels are not as your counsels.” This expression has been given a wide range of meanings. These words remind us of this beautiful scripture: “And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all” (Abraham 3:19). In my original written journal on Isaiah (which I have been destroying as I go, as it was but a very preliminary draft) I wrote about an experience I had when I belonged to the Modesto, California High Council. A decision was to be made about whether a member needed to be disfellowshipped or excommunicated. I was so sure it was the latter. But the Lord’s love and compassion for this individual were higher thoughts than mine. I was the *only* one to feel that excommunication was called for. I eventually aligned my thoughts with the rest of the brethren in attendance but felt greatly embarrassed. The Stake President asked me to give the closing prayer where I wept openly for being so far off the will of the Lord. Those in attendance tried to console me and explained that in these councils it is important to hear all perspectives in love, but once a decision has been made, to get squarely behind the decision. At that time I wrote, “I hope I will never pursue an idea with so much strength and be so far off the mark.” Years have passed since that awful day, and I feel I have yet a long way to go as I still seem to argue too vehemently for points I believe in. While it is true that I completely get behind the decision made by my leaders, I am embarrassed to say that I am still way too harsh in my judgments. It is Ok to give an opinion in love, but I must remember that: “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matthew 7:2, or 3 Nephi 14:2, where I have been repeatedly reading this verse lately). ¶ Ibn Ezra suggests: “You thought that I should punish you even after your return to me; but your thoughts are not mine; my intention is to do good to you.” Such thoughts remind us of Joseph in Egypt and his kind dealings with his brothers. Ibn Ezra is making it clear that turning to the Lord will bring us joy. Indeed, *He will abundantly pardon.* ¶ Elder Theodore M. Burton quoted ISAIAH 55:7-11 and warned: “We are trying to solve our problems by man’s philosophy and learning and by human wisdom . . . God’s way is the way to solve our political, moral, ethical, even our financial problems. The way of the Lord can eliminate wars,

riots, discrimination, suffering, and starvation. What the world then needs is direction from a true prophet who, knowing the mind and the will of God, can speak in his name with power and authority and say, ‘Thus saith the Lord!’”¹⁶ Elder Bernard P. Brockbank admonished: “Religions and doctrines originating with men cannot bring salvation to a child of God. The Lord counsels man in the Holy Bible that God’s ways did not come from man or from this earth . . . The thoughts and ways of God provide for man the greatest opportunities and blessings of this life . . . To know and love God are sacred blessings. One of the ways that we can come to know God and Jesus Christ is through sincere prayer. The Lord commands, ‘Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing—yea, even more than if you should obtain treasures of earth.’ In the Bible we are commanded to ‘pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.’ Prayer to God will give you power to conquer and overcome the evil powers and influences of Satan and this world. The Lord said, ‘Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work.’ Prayer to God is a sacred blessing.”¹⁷ ¶ Elder Delbert L. Stapley said: “The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only sure basis for a righteous life. No other plan, moral code, or creed can match or supplant its teachings. The gospel is a wise and guiding set of laws, principles, and ordinances for all men to live by. The weakness and foolishness of many today cause them to be more interested in the teachings of man than in the teachings of God, as found in both ancient and modern scriptures. Unfortunately, for the most part, the thoughts of mortal men are centered in this temporal life and not on the eternal life. The philosophies of men cannot replace nor transcend gospel philosophy as given in the revelations of God, nor can the science of man replace the truths revealed by God through his prophets. God’s ways are not man’s ways, but are infinitely superior thereto.”¹⁸ In 1879 Elder Orson Pratt testified: “Fifty-two years shall have passed tomorrow since the Lord permitted his holy angel to descend from heaven and commit into the care and charge of Joseph Smith, a young man, plates which had the appearance of gold, filled with engravings. He obtained these plates on the 22nd day of September in the year 1827, being then not quite twenty-two years of age. This young man was not learned, like those

¹⁶ Theodore M. Burton, “Thus Saith the Lord,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, p. 78.

¹⁷ Brockbank, Elder Bernard P., “Prayer to Our Heavenly Father,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 58.

¹⁸ Delbert L. Stapley, “The Path to Eternal Glory,” *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 99.

educated in colleges and theological institutions; indeed, he was a farmer's boy, unacquainted with the arguments, and the tenets, and the creeds, and the institutions of religion that existed around him, except what he had heard from time to time, in the neighborhood where his father resided; a young man not versed in the Scriptures any more than most of the common lads of that age. And we all know that there are but a very few among farmers that have the opportunity of informing their minds at so early a period—at the age of twenty-one—in regard to the doctrines and prophecies contained in the Scriptures. You may, some of you, wonder, perhaps, why the Lord should select an instrument of this kind; why he did not take a person more qualified by education, more experienced in the doctrines taught among the human family, more conversant with the Bible. You perhaps, may think in your own mind that if you had had the selection of the individual to begin the work of the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth in the last days, and you had followed the best wisdom you had on the subject, that you certainly would have selected a person well trained and skilled in the different doctrines of the day. But the Lord does not see as man sees, his thoughts are not like our thoughts, neither are his ways like our ways. Hence he chose a man unconnected with any of the religious societies of the day—untaught in the Scriptures and doctrines of the different religious denominations—he selected a man of his own choice, as he had frequently done in former ages of the world.”¹⁹ Similarly, President S. Dilworth Young testified: “As with me, it will thrill you that the Lord takes a pure boy and teaches him the truth before he can be taught what uninspired men conceive to be truth. Perhaps you will remember that the Lord puts into the minds and hearts of his prophets what he wants them to think and say rather than the thoughts of philosophical men. Remember what he said to Isaiah: ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.’”²⁰ Also, Elder George A. Smith, “If the religious nations of the world had been consulted in establishing a new religion with the intention of superseding all other sects and denominations, they would have selected a grave council of the wisest, most learned, and pious men they could find—learned in theology, in philosophy, in law, and in every department of science. Yet we are told that the Savior, when he visited the earth, selected as his ministers and messengers fishermen and other individuals from the lower orders of the people—men with but little learning, and less reputation, to proclaim

the Gospel, testify of the truth, and be witnesses of his advent into the world—of his miracles and resurrection from the dead. So it was in the present generation . . . He passed over the learned institutions of the day, and went into a field and laid his hand on the head of Joseph Smith, a ploughboy—upon one who cultivated the earth, and had scarcely education enough to read his Bible—whom he inspired, appointing him to translate the Book of Mormon, and authorizing him to proclaim the Gospel and administer the plan of salvation. Ere long, this young man became the scoff, the by-word, and hiss of all the learned Christians on the earth. But the Lord said, ‘My ways are not as your ways, nor my thoughts as your thoughts.’”²¹ ¶ *Neither [are] your ways my ways, saith the LORD.* The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “And your ways are not right, as the ways of my goodness, saith the Lord.” The LXX (Ⓣ) reads, “Nor are my ways as your ways, saith the Lord.” Elder Delbert L. Stapley admonished: “Every individual in the Lord’s church is entitled to the sure knowledge, received by personal revelation through the Holy Ghost, that the Church is true. Personal revelation to the individual is the strength of the church of Jesus Christ in any age. We must learn the truth for a surety and not merely suppose we are right. It is our responsibility to know—and by the aid of the scriptures and the Holy Ghost one can know without any doubt. One cannot prayerfully study the scriptures without gaining the knowledge and testimony that there is only one way to exaltation. The scriptures point the way very clearly. It must be God’s way and not man’s way, for God has said: ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.’”²²

9 For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth. The LXX (Ⓣ) reads, “But distant as the heaven is from the earth.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “For as the heavens are exalted above the earth.” Wade points us to Psalm 103:11: “For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.” Elder Lance B. Wickman spoke about the “Why” questions that we ask ourselves, “. . . do not ever doubt the goodness of God, even if you do not know ‘why.’ The overarching question asked by the bereaved and the burdened is simply this: Why? Why did our daughter

¹⁹ Pratt, Elder Orson, “The Book of Mormon, Etc.” *Journal of Discourses*, 21:168–178, 21 September 1879.

²⁰ Young, President S. Dilworth, “For Thy Servant Heareth,” *Ensign*, November 1974, p. 90.

²¹ George A. Smith, “Divine Origin, Etc.” *Journal of Discourses* 7:111, 10 January 1858.

²² Delbert L. Stapley, “What Constitutes the True Church,” *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 21.

die, when we prayed so hard that she would live and when she received priesthood blessings? Why are we struggling with this misfortune, when others relate miraculous healing experiences for their loved ones? These are natural questions, understandable questions. But they are also questions that usually go begging in mortality. The Lord has said simply, ‘My ways [are] higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.’ As the Son’s will was ‘swallowed up in the will of the Father’ so must ours be.”²³ Then Elder John Taylor testified: “. . . the kingdom of God can only be comprehended by the spirit of revelation and the principle of eternal truth, unless men are in possession of this principle, and have the light of revelation, they do not appreciate, neither can they understand correctly the work in which we are engaged.”²⁴ President Brigham Young, Jr. testified: “We know, brethren, that it is impossible to please the Lord by following the counsels of our own minds, unless they are enlightened by the Spirit of the Almighty. The wisdom of man is not the wisdom of God, and to be successful in extending and strengthening the cause of God on the earth, we must have his Spirit to guide us. If our ways were as God’s ways, we would do as he would have us do; but it is evident to all who are acquainted with the actions of the human family, not excluding the Latter-day Saints, that the mind of man is not as God’s mind. A verse of Scripture, which now occurs to my mind, will illustrate this. It will be found in the 11th verse of the 2nd chapter of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians—‘For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.’”²⁵ ¶ Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: “. . . there are ways provided—formal and informal—for expressing legitimate concerns and complaints, and for doing so productively. These avenues often go unused, especially if one’s real desire is to parade his discontent. Letting off steam always produces more heat than light . . . Some actually question God’s capacity, this in the face of His assurance to us: ‘I am able to do my own work.’ Therefore, murmuring can be another form of mocking God’s plan of salvation. Yes, such individuals say, God has an overall general plan, but we don’t care for His specific timing. Yet the scriptures specifically advise us that ‘all things must come to pass in their time.’ Yes, such individuals may acknowledge God, but they criticize His ways. We want things to be done in our

ways, even though our ways are much lower ways.”²⁶ On another occasion Elder Maxwell taught: “Since knees often bend long before minds, holding back this ‘part’ deprives God’s work of some of mankind’s very best intellects. Far better to be meek like Moses, who learned things he ‘never had supposed.’ Yet, sadly, brothers and sisters, in the subtle interplay of agency and identity, there is so much hesitation. The surrender of the mind is actually a victory, because it then introduces us to God’s stretching and ‘higher’ ways!”²⁷ ¶ President Thomas S. Monson explained: “A patriarchal blessing is a revelation to the recipient, even a white line down the middle of the road, to protect, inspire, and motivate activity and righteousness. A patriarchal blessing literally contains chapters from your book of eternal possibilities. I say eternal, for just as life is eternal, so is a patriarchal blessing. What may not come to fulfillment in this life may occur in the next. We do not govern God’s timetable. ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”²⁸ President Monson also reminded us: “Another who portrayed the virtue of patience was the Prophet Joseph Smith. After his supernal experience in the grove called Sacred, where the Father and the Son appeared to him, he was called upon to wait. At length, after Joseph suffered through over three years of derision for his beliefs, the angel Moroni appeared to him. And then more waiting and patience were required. Let us remember the counsel found in Isaiah: ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”²⁹ ¶ *So are my ways higher than your ways.* The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “So is my way distant from your ways.” The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, “So are my ways exalted above your ways.” Elder David A. Bednar explained: “The limitations that are the natural consequence of advancing age can in fact become remarkable sources of spiritual learning and insight. The very factors many may believe limit the effectiveness of these servants can become some of their greatest strengths. Physical restrictions can expand vision. Limited stamina can clarify priorities. Inability to do many things can direct focus to a few things of

²³ Wickman, Elder Lance B., “But If Not,” *Ensign*, November 2002, p. 30.

²⁴ Taylor, Elder John, “Men’s Learning.” *Journal of Discourses* 11: 314–320, 24 February 1867.

²⁵ Young, President Brigham, “God’s Ways not as Man’s Ways.” *Journal of Discourses* 15:139-145, 25 August 1872.

²⁶ Maxwell, Elder Neal A., “Murmur Not,” *Ensign*, November 1989, p. 82.

²⁷ Maxwell, Elder Neal A., “Consecrate Thy Performance,” *Ensign* (CR), May 2002, p.36.

²⁸ Monson, President Thomas S., “Your Patriarchal Blessing: A Liahona of Light,” *Ensign*, November 1986, p. 65.

²⁹ Monson, President Thomas S., “Patience—A Heavenly Virtue,” *Ensign* (CR), November 1995, p.59.

greatest importance. Some people have suggested younger, more vigorous leaders are needed in the Church to address effectively the serious challenges of our modern world. But the Lord does not use contemporary philosophies and practices of leadership to accomplish His purposes. We can expect the President and other senior leaders of the Church will be older and spiritually seasoned men. The Lord's revealed pattern of governance by councils in His Church provides for and attenuates the impact of human frailties. Interestingly, the mortal limitations of these men actually affirm the divine source of the revelations that come to and through them. Truly, these men are called of God by prophecy. I have observed in my Brethren at least a part of the Lord's purpose for having older men of maturity and judgment serve in senior leadership positions of the Church. These men have had a sustained season of tutoring by the Lord, whom they represent, serve, and love. They have learned to understand the divine language of the Holy Spirit and the Lord's patterns for receiving revelation. These ordinary men have undergone a most extraordinary developmental process that has sharpened their vision, informed their insight, engendered love for people from all nations and circumstances, and affirmed the reality of the Restoration. I have witnessed repeatedly my Brethren striving diligently to fulfill and magnify their responsibilities while struggling with serious physical problems. These men are not spared from affliction. Rather, they are blessed and strengthened to press forward valiantly while suffering in and with affliction."³⁰ So, we have seen, the Lord sometimes chooses the very young, such as the Prophet Joseph Smith; at other times more experiences and older members, others the older (as in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve), depending on His will and the needs of His Church. ¶ *And my thoughts than your thoughts.* The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, "And your thoughts from my understanding." The Douay-Rheims (Ⓓ) has, "And my thoughts above your thoughts." Elder Rafael E. Pino recalled: "Elder David B. Haight told a story about the sculptor Michelangelo to illustrate the importance of seeing everything in proper perspective: 'As the sculptor was chiseling a block of marble, a boy came every day and watched shyly. When the figure of David emerged and appeared from that stone, complete for all the world to admire, the boy asked Michelangelo, "How did you know he was in there?"' The perspective with which the sculptor saw that block of marble was different than that of the boy who was watching him work. The artist's vision of the possibilities encased in the stone allowed him to create a work of art. The Lord knows what He wants to accomplish with each one of

³⁰ David A. Bednar, "Chosen to Bear Testimony of My Name," *Ensign*, November 2015, p. 128.

us. He knows the kind of reform He wants to achieve in our lives, and we do not have the right to counsel Him. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts."³¹ Elder Sam K. Shimabukuro observed: "The greatest of all achievements that we can attain in our long and challenging journey through immortality is when our claim to discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ reaches the stage where we can say, with all honesty, His ways are our ways and His thoughts our thoughts."³²

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth. The Targum (Ⓒ) has, for the third clause, "And it is impossible (in the Chaldee, 'impossible for it') that it should return thither." The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, "For as the rain when it descendeth, or snow, from the heavens, doth not return thither, till it hath watered the earth." The Douay-Rheims (Ⓓ) has, "And as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return no more thither, but soak the earth, and water it." ¶ *And maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.* The Targum (Ⓒ) has, "And maketh it to sprout, and to be fruitful, that it may give sufficient (literally, 'according to the sufficiency') grain of seed to the sower, and food sufficient for the eater." The LXX (Ⓔ) reads, "And caused it to generate and bloom and yield seed for the sower and bread for food." The Douay-Rheims (Ⓓ) has, "And make it to spring, and give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." ¶ In much of ancient agriculture, part of the harvest was used as seed to plant again, and the rest for food that had to last until next harvest. Famines would put people's self-discipline to the test, as they were tempted to eat the seed, and thus make matters worse. Where crops grew solely on that year's rain, having rain in due season was imperative. Just like having plentiful rain for good crops just about guaranteed sufficient seed for planting as well as foodstuff for eating, even more so, God's word would never go out for naught but His purposes would be accomplished. Just like water that comes down in the form of rain and waters the ground and thus provides for both seed and food to eat before it

³¹ Rafael E. Pino, "The Eternal Perspective of the Gospel," *Ensign*, May 2015, p. 117.

³² Shimabukuro, Elder Sam K., "What Doest Ye for Christ?," *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 84.

flows back to the ocean where it evaporates, and thus returns to the skies, so also, in a more perfect way, God's word would never go forth without accomplishing its purpose.

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it.

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, "Thus shall the word of my kindness, which proceeds from my presence, it is not possible that it shall return to my presence void." The LXX (ⓖ) reads, "So shall it be with my word: when it hath proceeded from my mouth, it shall not be reversed." ¶ Kay brilliantly observes and applies this verse to Christ: ". . . the final application of the parable is to Him who *came down from heaven and gave life unto the world* (John 6:33); who said, "I came down from heaven . . . *to do the will of Him that sent me*" (ib. 38; cp. 39, 40; Matthew 26:39; cp. also Psalm 72:6)." ¶ Ibn Ezra summarizes as: "I shall fulfil all I spake to the prophets." Whitehouse correctly says: "does not become impotent and ineffectual." Oswalt, leaning on Muilenburg, has: "It is not rain that is the source of life but the word of God." ¶ Then Elder Wilford Woodruff shared: "Joseph Smith knew just as well as the Lord knew that he was called of God, and that he was called to perform a work for the redemption of man. Has he ever disappointed anybody when he has made a promise to them? Has he ever disappointed a Prophet or lawgiver in any age of the world? No, never. But he has declared that the heavens and the earth shall pass away, but his word shall never pass away, but that it shall all be fulfilled. It is just so in our day. All the words which the Lord has spoken through his servants will be fulfilled to the very letter, whether those words are in reference to the salvation of the righteous or the condemnation of the wicked. Christ had his mind upon this point when he said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' Again, it is written, 'For I will hasten my word to perform it,' and when the Lord spake through Isaiah upon this subject he said, 'So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.'"³³ A few years earlier Elder Woodruff similarly said: "If we had correct understanding, we should all see as the Lord

does, and should understand how his purposes will be accomplished; but we are to walk by faith, and not by sight. I feel to rejoice in knowing that the kingdom of God is established on the earth, and that it will spread itself abroad, become like a great mountain, and finally fill the earth. The words of the Lord will not return to him void; but whether he speaks by his own voice or the voice of his servants, those words will have their fulfillment."³⁴ ¶ *But it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it.* The LXX (ⓖ) reads, "Till all are accomplished which I willed; and till I prosper thy ways and my commandments." The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, "But it shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it." President Brigham Young taught: "In the progress of the age in which we live, we discern the fulfillment of prophecy, and the preparation for the second coming of our Lord and Savior to dwell upon the earth. We expect that the refuge of lies will be swept away, and that city, nation, government, or kingdom which serves not God, and gives no heed to the principles of truth and religion, will be utterly wasted away and destroyed. The word has gone forth from the Almighty, and will not return unto Him void. It becomes us, therefore, one and all, to have on our wedding garments, to have our lamps trimmed and burning, well filled with oil, lest we also be taken unawares, and share the fate of the foolish virgins. May the Lord bless us with the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that our minds may be enlightened, our understandings enlarged and strengthened; and may His grace, wisdom, and intelligence be given unto us for our preservation and sanctification according to our day and generation, for the Redeemer's sake."³⁵ As our minds are enlightened, we will surely *see eye to eye* (ISAIAH 52:8).

12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap [their] hands.

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: The Targum (Ⓣ) has, "For ye shall go out with joy from among the nations, and with peace ye shall be carried to your land." The LXX (ⓖ) reads, "For with gladness you shall go forth; and with joyfulness you shall be taught." Cowles suggests that this verse makes an allusion to the Exodus from Egypt. We can also

³³ Woodruff, Elder Wilford, "Fulfillment of Prophecy, Etc." *Journal of Discourses* 10:9–17, 27 July 1862.

³⁴ Woodruff, Elder Wilford, "Testimony of the Spirit of Truth, Etc." *Journal of Discourses* 8: 261–267, 22 April 1860.

³⁵ Young, President Brigham, "The Constitution of the United States, Etc." *Journal of Discourses* 2:170–178, 18 February 1855.

speak of the spiritual leaving of Babylon. ¶ *The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing.* The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “The mountains and the hills shall rejoice before you with praise.” The LXX (Ⓟ) reads, “For the mountains and hills shall leap for joy, expecting you.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, “The mountains and the hills shall sing praise before you.” Elder Orson Pratt testified: “We shall roll down from the mountains, and though we may be considered but a little stone cut out of the mountains without human ingenuity, without mankind undertaking to carry on this work of their own accord, the time will come when God will cause the stone of the mountains to roll, and then it will roll down and build up the central city of Zion, and that, too, long before this gathering from the distant nations shall cease. I do not know how much before the ten tribes will come from the north; but after Zion is built in Jackson County, and after the Temple is built upon that spot of ground where the cornerstone was laid in 1831; after the glory of God in the form of a cloud by day shall rest upon that Temple, and by night the shining of a flaming fire will fill the whole heavens round about; after every dwelling place upon Mount Zion shall be clothed upon as with a pillar of fire by night, and a cloud by day, about that period of time, the ten tribes will be heard of, away in the north, a great company, as Jeremiah says, coming down from the northern regions, coming to sing in the height of the latter-day Zion . . . In that day the trees of the field will clap like hands, says the Prophet, and in that day the Lord will open waters in the wilderness, and streams in the desert, to give drink to his chosen, his people Israel.”³⁶ ¶ *And all the trees of the field shall clap [their] hands.* The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “And all the trees of the field shall clap with their branches.” The LXX (Ⓟ) reads, “And all the trees of the field will clap with their branches.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, “And all the trees of the country shall clap their hands.” This is one of my father’s favorite scriptures. He turned 90 years old this month. We spoke about this verse a few days ago when I mentioned that I was now working on ISAIAH 55. Sister Elaine L. Jack shared: “We will climb our spiritual mountains rejoicing. Our hearts will resonate to Isaiah’s words, ‘For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.’ Each insight, each spiritual view should fill us with a spirit of thanksgiving that spills over into the lives of those around us. We sisters in Zion have the best reasons to thank the Lord. Thank the Lord for your testimony. Thank Him for being alive now. When your challenges come, thank the Lord for your knowledge that He lives,

³⁶ Pratt, Elder Orson, “Resurrection of the Saints, Etc.” *Journal of Discourses* 18: 57–69, 25 July 1875.

and feel peace knowing He loves you. As you work hard, say, ‘The Lord doth give me exceedingly great joy in the fruit of my labors.’ When you struggle, say, ‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.’ With each new lesson learned and each answer to personal prayer, say, ‘I rejoice exceedingly that [my] Lord Jesus Christ hath been mindful of [me].’”³⁷ ¶ Elder Orson Pratt speaks of the gathering of Israel: “Now I will quote a parallel prophecy, delivered to Joseph Smith, one of the greatest Prophets who has lived on the earth in any generation, save it be our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Some forty-three years ago, in speaking of the lost ten tribes of Israel, the Lord says— ‘They who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence.’ To show that they come with power, they come on a highway cast up for them; the ice feels the power of God and flows down, making room for them; and the barren deserts of the north, wherever they may go and need water, will yield forth pools of living water to quench their thirst. As they come to sing in the height of Zion, the everlasting hills, this great Rocky Mountain range, extending from the arctic regions south to the central portions of America, will tremble beneath the power of God at the approach of that people. Then will be fulfilled the saying of David, that the mountains shall skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs, before his people. The very trees of the field will clap like hands, as the Psalmist David has said.”³⁸ Elder Pratt, a few years earlier, also associated the clapping of hands to the return to Jackson County: “We shall go back to Jackson County. Not that all this people will leave these mountains, or all be gathered together in a camp, but when we go back there will be a very large organization consisting of thousands, and tens of thousands, and they will march forward, the glory of God overshadowing their camp by day in the form of a cloud, and a pillar of flaming fire by night, the Lord’s voice being uttered forth before his army. Such a period will come in the history of this people, and when it arrives the mountains and the hills will be ready to break forth with a loud voice before the Lord’s army, and the very trees of the

³⁷ Elaine L. Jack, “Look Up and Press On,” *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 98.

³⁸ Pratt, Elder Orson, “Gathering of Israel, Etc.” *Journal of Discourses* 18:24–29, 11 April 1875.

field will wave to and fro by the power of God, and clap like hands. The everlasting hills will rejoice, and they will tremble before the presence of the Lord; and his people will go forth and build up Zion according to celestial law.”³⁹ ¶ Rashi, in Slotki-Rosenberg, suggest that “The bare mountains and desolate hills will be clothed with luxuriant vegetation and all the trees of the field will produce rich fruits.” This, indeed, fits well with context of the earth’s transformation into its paradisiacal glory that we see in ISAIAH 55:13.

13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign [that] shall not be cut off.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree. The Targum (Ⓒ) has, “Instead of the wicked the righteous shall rise up.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And instead of the briar, shall spring up the cypress.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) renders it *shrub* rather than *thorn*. The earth shall once again enter into its terrestrial glory, and become like the Garden of Eden. Wade says: “The treeless waste, where nothing but desert plants grow, will be changed into a park.” Margalioth, as mentioned in Isaiah 3, considers the *thesis and antithesis* of this verse, using the words *instead of / and instead of*, תַּחַת / תַּחַת,

תַּחַת / תַּחַת, “And it shall come to pass, that INSTEAD OF sweet smell there shall be stink; AND INSTEAD OF a girdle a rent; AND INSTEAD OF well set hair baldness; AND INSTEAD OF a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning INSTEAD OF beauty,” and contrasts it to several like verses here in the second half of Isaiah. Whereas in Isaiah 3 the comparison was of something good turned into something bad through תַּחַת / תַּחַת, the same words are inverted so that instead good there would be something better. “INSTEAD OF the thorn shall come up the fir tree, AND INSTEAD OF the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off” (Isaiah 55:13). See also Isaiah 60:17 and 61:3. ¶ *And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree:* The Targum (Ⓒ) has, “And instead of sinners shall rise up those that fear sin.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And instead of the thistle, shall come up the myrtle.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) renders it *nettle* rather than *brier*. Cowles explains: “Another figure conceives of the thorns and briars that came upon the earth, the curse for man’s fall (Genesis 3:17-19), as now giving way to growths alike beautiful

and useful . . . making this sin-cursed earth again a paradise of moral purity and beauty.” Elder Charles W. Penrose taught regarding the Millennial renewal of this orb: “The earth itself shall feel the influence of that divine spirit [when ‘the Spirit of God shall be poured out upon all flesh’ as mentioned in Joel 2:28], and cease to bring forth thorns and briars, and in the place thereof ‘shall spring up the fir and the myrtle tree;’ and ‘the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea.’”⁴⁰ ¶ *And it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign [that] shall not be cut off.* The Targum (Ⓒ) has, “And it shall be before the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not cease.” The LXX (Ⓞ) reads, “And the Lord shall be for a name, and for an everlasting sign which shall not fail.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “And the Lord shall be named for an everlasting sign, that shall not be taken away.” Whitehouse has: “These transformations in nature shall be the everlasting sign of Yahweh’s new covenant with His Redeemed People (cf. the ‘new heaven and new earth’ of Isaiah 65:17; 66:22) which convey the same idea of an ‘everlasting sign.’”

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³⁹ Pratt, Elder Orson, “Consecration, Etc.” *Journal of Discourses* 15: 354–366, 9 March 1873.

⁴⁰ Penrose, Elder Charles W., “Prophecies Relating to Our Day, Etc.” *Journal of Discourses* 24:203–217, 18 May 1883. Also see, “The Work of the Restitution, Etc.” *Journal of Discourses* 20: 293–299, 17 August 1879.
