

## Institute 2 Nephi 16-20 // Isaiah 6-10 ISAIAH'S PROPHETIC CALL: Heavenly Throne or Temple

As you read 2 Nephi 12-20, look for the temple as at the center of Isaiah's prophetic writings. An independent biblical scholar, Margaret Barker, has recently written: "The temple and its rituals were at the center of Isaiah's world." (Margaret Barker, "Isaiah," *Eerdman's Commentary*, 2003). I hope it is the center of our world too.

- Isaiah served under four kings of Judea: Uzziah (died ~740), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah
- Where did this call take place? How does Isaiah's call compare with other prophetic calls, such as Lehi's call in 1 Nephi 1? John's call in Revelation 4:1-9, 5:5? Ezekiel 1? Moses on Siani, the Brother of Jared on Mt. Shelem, or with Joseph Smith's Maple Grove?
- Temples on earth are patterned after the Temple in heaven that is described here. God's heavenly Temple includes His throne (Holy of Holies), hence the name for such visions is "Throne Theophany." Temples on earth are patterned after the God's heavenly Temple).

### TEXT

- Vs. 1 A "train" often represents the high priest's robes, but here God's train or flowing robes may represent his authority or His glory filling the Temple. I see them as the priesthood robes of righteousness.
- Vs. 2 Above the throne are angels /cherubim / seraphim /"burning ones" or fiery beings of light. In Ex 25:18, Solomon's Temple had two giant winged seraphs on either side of the Ark of the Covenant. The golden lid or covering becomes the place where God sits, or His throne. In English Tyndale called it the "mercy seat."
- Each of the seraphs had six wings. D&C 77:4 explains that wings represent the power to move or act. If they have these wings over their face and feet it may represent power to see or think and power to move. Perhaps they also cover themselves in humility before the God of Glory.
- Vs. 3 The angels praise the Lord, proclaim his glory to the earth, and in Hebrew, repeating three times "emphasizes God's absolute holiness" (Ann Madsen *Opening Isaiah*, 21).
- Vs. 4 The smoke in the Temple comes from incense, which represents prayers ascending to God. This reference to smoke means the Temple is a place of prayer or filled with revelation. The door-sill and those who enter at the door, react to God's voice
- Vs. 5 Isaiah is humbled by the recognition of his mortal un-cleanliness. So much of our un-cleanliness comes out of our mouth. Isaiah emphasizes that he needs to be cleansed to see God with his own eyes.
- Vs. 6-7 The altar was the place for sacrifices typifying the atonement where one's sins were transferred to a vicarious carrier (ultimately being Christ). A coal from the altar represents a cleansing power of the atonement. Isaiah felt his lips were unclean, so his mouth was purged. (In our lives the Holy Ghost acts as the cleansing agent to purge our sins.)
- Vs. 8 The call of the Lord seeks those willing to serve him. "Here am I" is the phrased used by Christ in Abr 3:27; Satan in Moses 4:1; Isaac in Gen 22:7; Parable of the two sons in Matt 21:28-32. We too should strive to respond to God's call in like willingness
- Vs. 9 The BoM and JST add the phrase, "[but they] received not." It gives the people responsibility for obstinately refusing God's requests. We do not understand spiritual things if we are spiritually immature. Jesus referenced this passage from Isaiah 6 in JST Matt 13:12-15; Luke 8:10.) I carry this perspective into the next verse.
- Vs 10 "'Make the heart of this people fat' describes the consequence of the people's rejection of Isaiah's message, not its purpose" (Hoyt Brewster, Jr., *Isaiah Plain and Simple*: 60). New Heart English Bible also changes the meaning: "The heart of this people has grown dull, and their ears sluggish, and they have closed their eyes, otherwise they might see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn back, and I would heal them
- Vs. 13 A remnant will return—the size of a tithe—just as seeds grew again from fallen leaves. Br. Brewster suggests, "This may be symbolic of the Lord's portion a tithe. Only those who will be the Lord's people (or desire to be and live accordingly) will return or be gathered in with the redeemed of the Lord. The number of these returnees will be but a fraction ('a tenth') of the original group" (Ibid., 61).

#### **New American Standard 1977**

"Render the hearts of this people insensitive,  
Their ears dull,  
And their eyes dim,  
Lest they see with their eyes,  
Hear with their ears,  
Understand with their hearts,  
And return and be healed.

## Isaiah Parallel Text: <https://rsc.byu.edu/opening-isaiah>. \$10

3 Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub<sup>e</sup> thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field;<sup>f</sup>  
4 And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking

3 Then said the Lord unto Isaiah: Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field;  
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4 And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; and<sup>1a</sup> fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking

3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field,  
4 and say to him, Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands,

1<sup>a</sup> Isa 7–8 tell the story of the war in ca. 734–32 BC in which Syria joined Israel against Judah. Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the king of Israel fought against Ahaz, the king of Judah. See Map Isaiah 7–8.

| Kingdom            | Judah—Southern Kingdom | Israel—Northern Kingdom | Syria – Aram |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| <b>King</b>        | Ahaz                   | Pekah, Son of Remaliah  | Rezin        |
| <b>Capital</b>     | Jerusalem              | Samaria                 | Damascus     |
| <b>Also Called</b> | Son of David           | Ephraim                 |              |

1<sup>b</sup> BoM—The 1830 edition contained the word “and” here instead of “that.” The word was changed to “that” by Joseph Smith in the 1837 edition.

2<sup>c</sup> Meaning, it was told to Ahaz. See chart in fn. 7:1.

2<sup>d</sup> See NRSV translation. See chart in fn. 7:1.

3<sup>e</sup> Heb. Shear-jashub means “a remnant shall return.”

3<sup>f</sup> This probably refers to a pool outside of Jerusalem’s southern walls near the area where clothing was washed (by fullers). A war delegation from Assyria will come there to threaten Jerusalem in Isaiah 36:2.

| KJV Isa 7  | JST Isa 7   | Book of Mormon 2 Ne 17   | DSS Isa 7   | NRSV Isa 7  |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| firebrands, <sup>a</sup> for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.<br><br>5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying,<br>6 Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, <i>even</i> the son of Tabeal; <sup>b</sup><br>7 Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.<br>8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; <sup>c</sup> and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. <sup>d</sup><br>9 And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son. <sup>e</sup> If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established. <sup>f</sup><br>10 ¶ Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying,<br>11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. | 6 Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, <b>yea</b> the son of Tabeal:<br><br>8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. | firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.<br><br>5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying:<br>6 Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, <b>yea</b> , the son of Tabeal.<br>7 Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.<br>8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus [...] Rezin; and within three score and five years shall Ephraim be broken that it be not a people.<br>9 And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son. If ye will not believe surely ye shall not be established.<br>10 Moreover, the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying:<br>11 Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the <b>depths</b> , or in the <b>heights</b> above. | firebrands, <b>because of</b> <sup>1a</sup> the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.<br><br>9 And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son. If ye will not believe, surely <b>ye will not believe</b> . <sup>1a</sup> | because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.<br><br>5 Because Aram—with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah—has plotted evil against you, saying,<br>6 Let us go up against Judah and cut off Jerusalem and conquer it for ourselves and make the son of Tabeel king in it;<br><br>7 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.<br>8 For the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. (Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered, no longer a people.)<br><br>9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.<br>If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.<br>10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying,<br>11 Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. |

4<sup>a</sup> Firebrands are smoking torches that will soon go out.

6<sup>b</sup> The goal of the war was to place a puppet king, Tabeal, on Judah’s throne who would ally himself with Syria and Israel in their rebellion against Assyria.

8<sup>c</sup> The capital of Syria is Damascus, and the king of Syria is Rezin. See chart in fn. 7:1. See Map Isaiah 7–8.

8<sup>d</sup> Assyria conquered Israel in 722 BC, carrying away the ten tribes.

9<sup>e</sup> Samaria is the capital of the nation of Israel, also known as Ephraim. Remaliah’s son, Pekah, is the king of Israel. See chart in fn. 7:1. See Map Isaiah 7–8.

9<sup>f</sup> The Lord tells Ahaz to trust him rather than make treaties with men, either with Syria and Israel or with the powerful nation of Assyria.