

3 Nephi 23:1*Search these things*

1 Search the scriptures—search the revelations which are published and ask your Heavenly Father. In the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to His glory nothing doubting, He will answer you by the power of His Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves and not for another. You will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation... For when men receive their instruction from Him that made them, they know how He will save them... Again we say: Search the Scriptures, search the Prophets and learn what portion of them belongs to you.

Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 11-12.

2 I am grateful for the emphasis on reading the scriptures. I hope that for you this will become something for more enjoyable than a duty; that, rather, it will become a love affair with the word of God. I promise you that as you read, your minds will be enlightened and your spirits will be lifted. At first it may seem tedious, but that will change into a wondrous experience with thoughts and words of things divine.

Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Light Within You," *Ensign*, May 1995, 99

3 The Holy Ghost will guide what we say if we study and ponder the scriptures every day. The words of the scriptures invite the Holy Spirit... With daily study of the scriptures, we can count on this blessing...

We treasure the word of God not only by reading the words of the scriptures but by studying them. We may be nourished more by pondering a few words, allowing the Holy Ghost to make them treasures to us, than by passing quickly and superficially over whole chapters of scriptures. Henry B. Eyring, *Conference Report*, Oct. 1997' 114-115; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 83-84.

4
 Joshua 1:8 – meditate
 2 Timothy 2:15 – study
 1 Nephi 15:25 – heed
 1 Nephi 19:23 – liken
 2 Nephi 4:15 – ponder
 Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:37 – treasure up

3 Nephi 23:1-3*Great are the words of Isaiah*

5 Isaiah is the most quoted prophet in the New Testament. The Lord Himself quoted Isaiah seven times, the Apostles forty times more. In addition there are ninety partial quotes or paraphrases of Isaiah's words.

Isaiah is the most quoted prophet in the Doctrine and Covenants. Sixty-six quotations from thirty-one chapters of Isaiah attest to the singular importance of this great prophet.

All of this confirms that the Lord had a purpose in preserving Isaiah's words.

Boyd K. Packer, *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* [1991], 280.

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

If our eternal salvation depends upon our ability to understand the writings of Isaiah as fully and truly as Nephi understand them—and who shall say that such is not the case!—how shall we fare in that great day when with Nephi we shall stand before the pleasing bar of Him who said: “Great are the words of Isaiah?”

It just may be that my salvation (and yours also!) does in fact depend upon our ability to understand the writings of Isaiah as fully and truly as Nephi understood them. For that matter, why should either Nephi or Isaiah know anything that is withheld from us? Does not that God who is no respecter of persons treat all his children alike? Has he not given us his promise and recited to us the terms and conditions of his law pursuant to which he will reveal to us what he has reveal to them?

Bruce R. McConkie, “Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah,” *Ensign*, October 1973, p.78.

7 The Savior's exhortation to “search” Isaiah's writings “diligently” is instructive. His choice of words suggests that more than a casual reading of the text is required to best comprehend and be blessed by the prophet's message. Rather than a quick and superficial “frisk” of text, the Lord is asking for a thorough and careful investigation, looking for clues, insights, and evidences that will edify and enhance our understanding.

Terry Ball, *Thy People Shall Be My People and Thy God My God; The 22nd Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994], 17.

8 Isaiah, when facing a difficult teaching situation, did not use the parable as a tool; instead, he veiled his message in clouds of symbolism, poetry, and complex terminology. In other words, instead of speaking at a simple level and letting his listeners build upon that foundation, Isaiah spoke at a high intellectual and spiritual level, thus challenging or even forcing his listeners to attain that level before they could begin to understand his words. Isaiah was not only difficult, he was deliberately difficult. We must study his words, wrestle with them, and ponder them at great length before his powerful, sublime teachings begin to emerge and inspire us. Because of this, it is easy to become discouraged and give up before we begin to understand his message. However, through serious and prayerful study, when we finally grasp the language and ideas of a

particular chapter until they not only make sense, but enlighten and inspire as well, we realize that we have arrived at a profound level of understanding.

Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982], 134-135.

9 When the Savior commands us to read Isaiah, we should respond. But to understand it, we must read the Book of Mormon along with it, for that volume opens our eyes to the genuine meaning in his words. And further, we must look to the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who also provides valuable background for those ancient prophecies.

It is sad indeed to read the efforts of both Jewish and Gentile scholars as they try to interpret some of Isaiah's words...

Isaiah is definitely for today. His dealings with the ancient kings of Judah and his confrontations with them over the attacks of the Assyrians and the Babylonians are all in the past. References to them is strictly historical and has little relevance for us.

But his writings concerning Christ, the restoration of the gospel, the gathering of the Twelve Tribes, and the second coming of the Lord are all relevant—very much so. In them he writes both *about* us and *to* us who live right now. He not only tells much about the restoration of the gospel that has already taken place, such as the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, but he also foretells the signs of the coming of Christ. The signs of the times are now all about us. Shall we not give heed to them?

Mark E. Petersen, *Isaiah for Today* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981], 6-8.

The following list suggests some reasons why Isaiah's prophecies about the last days are so important:

10

1. Some fifty-three of the sixty-six chapters of the book of Isaiah, if they do not deal exclusively with the latter days, contain verses pointing to our time. (Those that do not are 7-9, 15-16, 20-21, 23, 36-39, and 46.) It would seem that the prophet spent more time envisioning our day than he did teaching in his own!
2. Nephi writes of Isaiah's prophecies, "I know that they shall be of great worth unto them in the last days; for in that day shall they understand them; wherefore, for their good I have written them." (2 Ne. 25:8; italics added.)
3. Nephi's brother Jacob writes, "And now, behold, I would speak unto you concerning things which are, and which are to come: wherefore, I will read you the words of Isaiah." (2 Ne. 6:4; italics added.)
4. As one scholar has described Isaiah, "Never perhaps has there been another prophet like Isaiah, who stood with his head in the clouds and his feet on the solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity and with mouth and hand in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in a very definite moment of history." (Robinson, *The Book of Isaiah*, P. 22; italics added.)
5. A latter-day apostle, Bruce R. McConkie, has said, "Much of what Isaiah... has to say is yet to be fulfilled. If we are to truly comprehend the writings of Isaiah, we cannot overstate or overstress the plain, blunt reality that he is in fact the prophet of the

restoration, the mighty seer of Jacob's seed who foresaw our day." (Ensign, Oct. 1973, p. 81.)

6. One clue to finding Isaiah's passages about the last days is to note his banner-phrase "in that day," for it occurs forty-two times throughout his work, almost always in conjunction with prophecies about our day.
7. Like the messianic prophecies, the prophecies of the last days in the writings of Isaiah are often written on many levels and find fulfillment in ages beyond those in which they were spoken or recorded. For this reason, some latter-day prophecies seem juxtaposed or out of place against fairly mundane historical background. But Isaiah is not alone in this prophetic style. In Revelation, John repeatedly moves backward and forward in time to make his point and strengthen his rhetoric, though in doing so he often confuses those who do not have the same prophetic insight as he does. For an Isaianic example, Isaiah launches forth in a declaration of the restoration of the gospel in chapter 5, verses 26-30 in the midst of what could be a call to repentance for any age.
8. Jews reading Isaiah miss the messianic references, which apply to Jesus Christ, while the traditional Christian readers usually overlook the glorious message of the Restoration. Latter-day Saints stand apart in their perspective of Isaiah because, with their fuller understanding of the gospel, they should be able to see how Isaiah's prophecies can find a full range of fulfillment and application.
9. Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, p. 55.

3 Nephi 23: 7-11

How be it ye have not written this thing?

- 11 [Joseph Smith's counsel to the Apostles regarding the importance of keeping good records.]
For neglecting to write... things when God had revealed them., not esteeming them of sufficient worth, the Spirit may withdraw and God may be angry; and ... a vast knowledge, of infinite importance,... is now lost...

The time will come, when, if you neglect to do this thing, you will fall by the hands of unrighteous men.

Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 2:199.

- 12 If every Elder had... kept a faithful record of all that he had seen, heard and felt of the goodness, wisdom and power of God, the Church would now have been in the possession of many thousand volumes, containing much important and useful information. How many thousands have been miraculously healed in this Church, and yet no one has recorded the circumstances. Is this right?... Should the knowledge of these things slumber in the hearts of those who witnessed them, and extend no further than their own verbal reports will carry them?... We should keep a record because Jesus has commanded it. We should keep a record because the same will benefit us and the generations of our children after us. We should keep a journal because it will furnish many important items for the general history of the Church which would otherwise be lost.

Orson Pratt, *Millennial Star*, 11:153.

13 I personally believe that the writing of personal and family histories will do more to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and the fathers to children than almost anything we can do. I am sure you will never turn your own children’s hearts more to you than you will by keeping a journal and writing your personal history. They will ultimately love to find out about your success and your failures and your peculiarities. It will tell them a lot about themselves, too. They will get a great desire to raise a family of their own when they see what a great blessing they were to you...

I am convinced that these records we are commanded to write are absolutely vital, not only to the salvation of our ancestors but also to ours, for are we not to be judged out of the books which John saw were to be opened, as recorded in Revelation 20:12?

Hartman Rector Jr., *Conference Report*, Apr. 1981 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981], 99.

14 That which I do not in some way record will be lost at my death, and that which I do not pass on to my posterity, they will never have...

A life that is not documented is a life that within a generation or two will largely be lost to memory...

Some years ago, I met the director of a Russian Orthodox monastery. He showed me volumes of his own extensive family research. He told me that one of the values, perhaps even the main value, of genealogy is the establishment of family tradition and the passing of these traditions on to younger generations. “Knowledge of these traditions and family history,” he said, “welds generations together.” Further, he told me: “If one knows he comes from honest ancestors, he is duty and honor bound to be honest. One cannot be dishonest without letting each member of his family down.”

Dennis B. Neuenschwander, *Ensign*, May 1999 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999], 84.

15 “What shall I write?” you ask. Write about anything that is worth preserving, or the best you have; and if you begin this while you are young, it will be quite easy for you when you become men and women. How pleasing it would be to you, and to your children, thirty, fifty, or eighty years hence, to sit down and read what took place around you in your childhood and youth! Would you not like to read what took place with our fathers, and mothers, and grandparents, while they were young and during their lives? But the object is not so much to get you to keep a journal while you are young, as it is to get you to continue it after you become men and women, even through your whole lives.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church—Wilford Woodruff [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004], 131.

16 Almost everyone who remembers President Kimball associates him with the keeping of journals. He stressed the sacred nature of journal writing and testified that journals and family histories strengthen family ties...

He once remarked: “There have been times when I have been so tired at the end of a day that the effort could hardly be managed, but I am so grateful that I have not let slip away from me

and my posterity those things that needed to be recorded. People who care nothing for the past usually have no thought for the future and are selfish in the way they use the present.”

Spencer W. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride—The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball*, Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005], 92.

17 Your own private journal should record the way you face up to challenges that beset you. Do not suppose life changes so much that your experiences will not be interesting to your posterity... Your journal should contain your true self rather than a picture of you when you are “made up” for a public performance. There is a temptation to paint one’s virtues in rich color and whitewash the vices, but there is also the opposite pitfall of accentuating the negative. Personally I have little respect for anyone who delves into the ugly phases of the life he is portraying whether it be his own or another’s. The truth should be told, but we should not emphasize the negative. Even a long life full of inspiring experiences can be brought to the dust by one ugly story... What could you do better for your children and your children’s children than to record the story of your life, your triumphs over adversity, your recovery after a fall, your progress when all seemed black, your rejoicing when you had finally achieved?... Get a notebook, my young folks, a journal that will last through all time, and maybe the angels may quote from it for eternity. Begin today and write in it your goings and comings, your deepest thoughts, your achievements and your failures, your associations and your triumphs, your impressions and your testimonies. Remember, the Savior chastised those who failed to record important events.

Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, pp. 350-351.

3 Nephi 23: 14

Expounded all scriptures

18 In one sense, to say that Jesus “expounded all scriptures in one” may mean that our Lord taught the people the entire plan of salvation out of the scriptures, perhaps even opening the heavens and providing the visions necessary to understand what had been, what was, and what was to come. Such a panoramic vision might not be unlike what was vouchsafed to Enoch (Moses 7), Moses (Moses 1), Nephi (1 Nephi 13-14), the brother of Jared (Ether 3), or Joseph Smith (D&C 76). Of his own experience in vision, Joseph Smith said: “Nothing could be more pleasing to the Saints upon the order of the Kingdom of the Lord, than the light which burst upon the world through the... vision [D&C 76]. Every law, every commandment, every promise, every truth, and every point touching the destiny of men, from Genesis to Revelation, where the purity of the Scriptures remains unsullied by the folly of men, go to show the perfection of the theory (of different degrees of glory in the future life) and witness the fact that the document is a transcript from the records of the eternal world.” (Teachings, p.11.) On a later occasion, the Prophet explained: “I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them.” (Teachings, p. 305).

Millet & Top, *BOM Commentary*, vol. 4 p. 160.

