

Rel A 304 Reading Questions for Tuesday, September 19

“Thoughts to Keep in Mind: Prophets and Prophecy,” in *Come, Follow Me*, 162–63.

Joseph M. Spencer, “The Prophets’ Remnant Theology: A Latter-day Saint Perspective,” in *Prophets and Prophecies of the Old Testament*, ed. Aaron P. Schade, Brian M. Hauglid, and Kerry Muhlestein (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017), 205–10. Read the introduction and the section titled “Laying a Foundation.”

“Book of Isaiah Summary: A Complete Animated Overview (Part 1)” [video], BibleProject, <https://youtu.be/d0A6Uchb1F8>.

“Book of Isaiah Summary: A Complete Animated Overview (Part 2)” [video], BibleProject, <https://youtu.be/TzdEPuqgQg>.

Isaiah 1:7–9; 4:2–6; 6:9–13; 10:20–23; 11:10–16

Spencer, “Prophets’ Remnant Theology,” 218–23. Read the sections titled “Isaiah” and “Conclusion.”

“Special Witness - President Nelson” [video], The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/video/2011-04-0018-special-witness-president-nelson>.

Last time we saw that over the course of Old Testament history, the Israelites seemed to run the whole covenant project into the ground. The Old Testament’s historical books end with Israel physically scattered and spiritually struggling. That creates a huge problem, because in order for the Abrahamic covenant to be fulfilled, God has to help all *Israel* experience the blessings of the covenant *and* use them to bring covenant blessings to *everyone else* on earth. How can God possibly make that all happen? The Israelite prophets laid the groundwork for answering that question, and as we’ll see this semester, the Book of Mormon fleshes it out in even greater detail and clarity.

As it turns out, a key concept for God’s plans is the idea of a *remnant*. The English word “remnant” is defined as “a usually small part, member, or trace remaining,” or “a small surviving group.” It’s etymologically related to the word “remain.” Watch for that term as you study today!

“Thoughts to Keep in Mind: Prophets and Prophecy,” in *Come, Follow Me*, 162–63.

1. The *Come, Follow Me* manual admits that “reading a chapter from Isaiah or Ezekiel might feel different from reading a general conference message” and that it might not seem “worth the effort” to read the words of ancient prophets when we have a living prophet today. What is a reason or two that the manual suggests as to why ancient prophets really are worth studying?

Joseph M. Spencer, “The Prophets’ Remnant Theology: A Latter-day Saint Perspective,” in *Prophets and Prophecies of the Old Testament*, ed. Aaron P. Schade, Brian M. Hauglid, and Kerry Muhlestein (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017), 205–10. Read the introduction and the section titled “Laying a Foundation.”

Notice you are not required to read the entire article, so pay attention to which sections you should read.

2. In Christian history, supersessionism or replacement theology is the idea that Jesus Christ superseded or replaced the older covenant with Israel, and now God works through the Christian church (broadly defined). One of the doctrinal contributions of the Book of Mormon is its repeated assertion that this idea is false: while many of the specific requirements of the law of Moses were fulfilled when Christ came, the Abrahamic covenant continues to function as His plan for saving humanity (see 3 Nephi 15:8). But how can God bless the world through Israel when Israel itself has so often broken the covenant? [←*rhetorical question*] Remnant theology offers the answer. Rather than eliminating or replacing Israel as the covenant people, God consistently does what?

“Book of Isaiah Summary: A Complete Animated Overview (Part 1)” [video], BibleProject, <https://youtu.be/d0A6Uchb1F8>.

3. Isaiah lived in Jerusalem in the latter half of Israel’s kingdom period and he spoke on God’s behalf to the leaders of Jerusalem and Judah. He spoke first of all a message of God’s judgment: he warned Israel’s corrupt leaders that their rebellion against their covenant with God would come at a cost, that God was going to use the great empires of _____ and after them _____ to judge Jerusalem if they persisted in idolatry and oppression of the poor.
4. Isaiah accuses Jerusalem’s leaders of covenant rebellion, idolatry, and injustice, and God says He’s going to judge the city by sending the nations to conquer Israel. Isaiah says that this will be like a purifying fire that burns away all that’s worthless in Israel in order to create a new Jerusalem that’s populated by a _____ (one word) that has repented and turned back to God.

5. All of Isaiah's warnings of divine judgment in Isaiah 1–39 lead up to what pivotal moment in Judah's history?

“Book of Isaiah Summary: A Complete Animated Overview (Part 2)” [video], BibleProject, https://youtu.be/_TzdEPuqgQg.

6. The book of Isaiah consists of two main halves, chapters 1–39 and chapters 40–66. Much of the first half (chapters 1–39) deals with the Assyrian crises taking place during Isaiah's lifetime. However, much of the second half (chapters 40–66) deals with a later period in history, after Isaiah's lifetime. What major event took place in between the first half and the second half?
7. Because the perspective in Isaiah chapters 40–66 is that of somebody who is living *after* the Babylonian exile, an era long after Isaiah died, Bible readers understand the authorial perspective in these in chapters in one of two ways.
 - A. Some identify the prophetic voice as still being Isaiah, but he has been prophetically transported 200 years into the future and speaks as if he were situated in that point in time (in other words, Isaiah speaks of events as having happened already in the “past” even though for him personally they are still in the future).
 - B. Others identify the prophetic voice as new prophets who have been preserving Isaiah's words and have been inspired to update and add to them in order to extend Isaiah's message of hope to future generations.

We have precedent for both kinds of scenarios elsewhere in the scriptures. Can you brainstorm any place in the scriptures where a prophet saw the future? Can you brainstorm any place in the scriptures where the words of multiple prophets are preserved within a single book?

8. The book of Isaiah concludes with an image for an entirely renewed creation where death and suffering are gone forever. In this renewed world of God's kingdom, people from “_____” (two words, see Isaiah 66:18, 20) are invited to come and join the servants of God's covenant family, echoing the promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.

Spencer, “Prophets’ Remnant Theology,” 218–23. Read the sections titled “Isaiah” and “Conclusion.”

9. In Isaiah 1–12, the prophet develops the story of the remnant of Israel, which in his immediate context were the righteous Judahites who trusted in Jehovah and survived the Assyrian invasion. Using an analogy that compares Judah to a chopped-down tree, the remnant is a “holy seed” that can sprout like “a branch” from the stump to re-grow the covenant people. Destruction and devastation for the covenant people eventually give way to the existence of a winnowed remnant fully prepared to do what?
10. The remnant that survived the Assyrian invasion in Isaiah’s day does not represent the entire story of Israel’s remnant. For Isaiah, this remnant was a type, a representation of how God will work “again” through remnants of Israel in later periods—a “second time.” These remnants are a crucial means by which God will accomplish His purposes in the Abrahamic covenant. Isaiah echoes the prophet Micah, anticipating the role Israel’s remnant is to play in redeeming whom?

“Special Witness - President Nelson” [video], The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/video/2011-04-0018-special-witness-president-nelson>.

11. Isaiah prophesied that just as God had saved the remnant of Israel in ancient times, He would one day do so “again the second time” (Isaiah 11:11). President Nelson quotes the Book of Mormon to explain that this “should be fulfilled in the latter days” (1 Nephi 15:18). As Israel is gathered, we can enter a covenant relationship with God and “claim the supernal blessings promised to the faithful lineage of Abraham.” President Nelson teaches that “the ultimate blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are conferred” in what setting? “These blessings,” he concludes, “allow us to come forth in the First Resurrection and inherit thrones, kingdoms, powers, principalities, and dominions, to our ‘exaltation and glory in all things’ [Doctrine and Covenants 132:19].”