

I Will Uphold thee With the Right Hand of My Righteousness (Isa. 41:10)

We are a covenant people. This term - *covenant* - is used throughout scripture, and often in context to the Lord performing miraculous works in behalf of His people in order to fulfill His covenant promises. For example, we have the following, as recorded by Nephi:

And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever (2 Ne. 29:14).

God referred to Abraham as his “friend,” and said of him:

For I know him (Abraham),
that he will command his children and his household after him,
and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment;
that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:19).

Note the important qualifications the Lord attributed to Abraham’s worthiness to become the “Father of the Covenant”; the Lord knew that Abraham would not only honor and keep the covenant promises that he had made, but that he would also most certainly teach his children to do likewise.

In fact, Abraham did confer his own characteristics of steady faith and commitment upon his birthright son, Isaac, who willingly complied with the sacrifice at Mount Moriah, and did not resist when his father laid him upon the altar (see Gen. 22:7-10). Furthermore, Isaac had his own personal encounter with the Lord, where he renewed the covenant that his father Abraham had made (see Gen. 26:1-6, 24-25).

Jacob, Isaac’s birthright son, inherited the birthright promises of the priesthood through which the “Abrahamic” promises were to be fulfilled (see Abr. 2). His elder twin brother, Esau, had disregarded the covenant promises, and they meant little to him (see Gen. 26:34-35). But, Jacob, earned his rights not only as a direct descendant of Abraham and Isaac, but also by his diligence and faithfulness in seeking after righteousness. He saw “the gate of heaven,” encountered the Lord, and following the pattern set for him, had his own personal experience of committing himself through covenant to God, and likewise received the covenant promises (see Gen. 28:11-17).

Jacob, like Abraham, adhered to the covenants that he had made with the Lord, and taught his children to do the same. Some years after his initial encounter with the Lord at “the gate of heaven,” Jacob met an angel who blessed him, and changed his name to Israel (see Gen. 32:24-28). From that point on, “Israel” became the name of God’s covenant family. According to the footnote for Gen. 32:28, the name “Israel” means “He persevered (with) God; it may also mean Let God prevail.”

The covenant represents a bond and a love so profound that it is difficult to fully comprehend. Moses taught the following:

When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance,
when he separated the sons of Adam,
he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

For the Lord's portion is his people;
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness;
he led him about,
he instructed him,
he kept him as the apple of his eye (Deut. 32:8-10).

What was the covenant given to Abraham, and how does that covenant pertain to us today? It is well for us to review the promises, and to ponder upon the question as to whether or not we, as did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are fulfilling the duty of teaching our children to walk in the covenant and to seek their own experience in renewing it personally with the Lord. To Abraham, the Lord said:

My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning;
therefore my hand shall be over thee.

And I will make of thee a great nation,
and I will bless thee above measure,
and make thy name great among all nations,
and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee,
that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

And I will bless them through thy name;
for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name,
and shall be accounted thy seed,
and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee;
and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood),
for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee,
and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body)
shall all the families of the earth be blessed,
even with the blessings of the Gospel,
which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal (Abr. 2: 8-11).

Elder Russel M. Nelson added:

The covenant that the Lord first made to Abraham and reaffirmed to Isaac and Jacob is of transcendent significance. It contained several promises:

Abraham's posterity would be numerous, entitled to eternal increase and to bear the priesthood;

He would become a father of many nations;

Christ and kings would come through Abraham's lineage;

Certain lands would be inherited;

All nations of the earth would be blessed by his seed;

That covenant would be everlasting - even through "a thousand generations" ("Children of the Covenant," April 1995 Conference).

Elder Joseph Anderson explained that "the new and everlasting covenant" is the covenant that was given to Abraham, and continues today:

The gospel is the everlasting covenant. In the very first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord, speaking through the Prophet Joseph Smith, said: "I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

"That mine everlasting covenant might be established;

"That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers" (D&C 1:17, 22-23).

And in the twenty-second section of the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord says: "This is a new and everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning" (D&C 22:1), meaning the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ("We Are a Covenant-Making People," October 1976 Conference).

An emphasis on the covenant is implied throughout Isaiah 41-42. In chapter 41, the Lord promises to fulfill His covenants to the children of Israel, and chapter 42 testifies of the Messiah's atoning sacrifice in behalf of covenant-breakers. Even though the children of Israel stray, and experience difficult consequences as a result, the Lord does not depart from His promises. As Nephi testified, the Lord will remember His covenants forever (2 Ne. 29:14), because of the faithfulness of Abraham and others who have gone before us. These promises are sure. However, we are each invited to have a personal experience and witness, and to enter into a first-hand covenant with the Lord.

Chapter 41 is a continuation of chapter 40, where the Lord calls for witnesses in a court-like setting. It continues the context of comparing the Lord to man, or comparing the Lord to false idols. "To whom then will ye like me, or shall I be equal?" the Lord had asked, (Isa. 40:25), and it is in that tone that chapter 41 begins. At the heart of chapter 41 is the promise of the Lord's covenant-making and covenant-keeping, which markedly distinguishes Him from man and from all of the false gods upon which man relies. In any court of justice, most juries would agree that if one party had broken their end of a contract, the other party would no longer be under any

obligation. But, this is not the way of the Lord, who not only keeps His word, but pays the price for the broken promises of the blind and disobedient.

In this context, then, the Lord calls upon the nations and isles of the sea, even upon all people to “come near together to judgment” (Isa. 41:1).

The Old Testament Student Manual provides the following explanation regarding “the isles”:

From time to time the Lord has led away remnants of Israel to “isles” from which He will eventually gather them before the Second Coming. The Americas are one of these isles (see 2 Ne. 10:20-21; compare 1 Ne. 19:10,16; 21:8; 22:3-4; 2 Ne. 10:8). A study of these references reveals that these “isles” were not known by others (see especially 1 Ne. 22:3-4). Isaiah alluded to scattered Israel when he used the metaphor “isles” and suggested that there, in the isles, they would learn to truth Him and wait upon His word and be renewed together. All of this would come near the time of the harvest. Then scattered Israel will learn a new song, the song of the redeemed, as they are gathered into the kingdom (see also Isa. 42:4, 10; Rev. 14:1-3).

The Lord then continues:

Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot,
gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings?
he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow.

He pursued them, and passed safely;
even by the way that he had not gone with his feet (Isa. 41:2-3).

There are many theories on who “the man from the east” might be. *The Old Testament Student Manual* explains this about “the righteous man from the East”:

John saw a vision similar to Isaiah’s and spoke of this righteous man as an “angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God” (Rev. 7:2). The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith that this angel of the east was “Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things” (D&C 77:9).

Of this “angel,” Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “Who has restored all things? Was it one man? Certainly not. Many angelic ministrants have been sent from the courts of glory to confer keys and powers, to commit their dispensations and glories again to men on earth. At least the following have come: Moroni, John the Baptist, Peter, James and John, Moses, Elijah, Elias, Gabriel, Raphael and Michael (D&C 13; 110; 128:19-21). Since it is apparent that no one messenger has carried the whole burden of the restoration, but rather that each has come with a specific endowment from on high, it becomes clear that *Elias is a composite personage. The expression must be understood to be a name and a title for those whose mission it was to commit keys and powers to men in this final dispensation (Doctrines of Salvation, Vol 1, pp. 170-174)*” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 221).

The Parry brothers add the following:

Jesus Christ, who is righteous, will come from the east at his second coming and will rule over kings and nations. This passage also refers to Cyrus, the king who conquered much of the world and ruled over kings (Isa. 44:24-45:5). The metaphors *dust to his sword/stubble to his bow* indicate the ease with which both Jesus (at his coming in glory) and Cyrus will conquer the nations. *called him to his foot* means “called him to serve.” (*Understanding Isaiah*, p.352).

Victor Ludlow contributes his own explanation of the “man from the east”:

The Lord next highlights the ministry of a prophesied leader who is divinely directed. An important sign of the Lord’s power is the fact that no one else has envisioned this messenger and what he will do. The powerful person who creates this havoc (vs. 2, 25) is unnamed, though scholars have speculated on a number of persons who could fulfill this prophecy, from Abraham to the future Messiah. If individuals near Isaiah’s time are considered, various Assyrian kings or ancient emperors, especially Cyrus, are likely candidates. But if this leader embodies as much spiritual power as he does political force, Christ is the most likely candidate - he came out of the eastern deserts after his forty-day fast to begin his mortal ministry (Matt. 3:13-4:11). Apparently, he will come again from the east at his political or second coming (Isa. 63). However, it is possible that the promised individual still belongs to the future and might be the evil king of the world (Gog of Magog) or the forces led by Michael who will oppose him (Dan. 11:44-12:1).

Regardless of the specific identity of the individual, the point that is being made in verse one is “Who raised him up?” indicating that if that righteous man has power, then how much more powerful is the Lord who created the plan, and issued the call. That point is driven home in the next verses:

Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?
I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he.

The isles saw it and feared;
the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came (Isa. 41:4-5).

Even as the Lord divided the earth according to the number of the children of Israel, as quoted above (Deut. 32:8-10), He has foreseen and foretold all that would occur from the beginning of time. Those who have believed the prophecies have reacted accordingly, including those who still look to future prophecies, such as the burning of the wicked at the Second Coming. Those specific prophecies (and many others) cause people throughout the earth to be afraid, change their own lives, and reach out to warn others.

They helped every one his neighbor;
and every one said to his brother,
Be of good courage.

So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith,
and he that smootheneth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying,
It is ready for the soldering:
and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved (Isa. 42:6-7).

The Doctrine and Covenants informs us:

Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people,
and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor (D&C 88:81).

Isaiah and other prophets warned the people of what was to come, and some turned to encourage and warn their neighbors to repent, while others turned to false and unsteady sources for help. Isaiah mocks the foolishness of men trusting in an image that they have to nail in place, yet that which people rely on today, if not God, is as useless and foolish.

But thou, Israel, art my servant,
Jacob whom I have chosen,
the seed of Abraham my friend.

Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth,
and called thee from the chief men thereof,
and said unto thee, Thou art my servant;
I have chosen thee,
and not cast thee away.

Fear thou not; for I am with thee:
be not dismayed; for I am thy God:
I will strengthen thee;
yea, I will help thee;
yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded:
they shall be as nothing;
and they that strive with thee shall perish.

Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee:
they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee,
Fear not; I will help thee.

Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel;
I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer,
the Holy One of Israel.

Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth:
thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small,
and shalt make the hills as chaff.

Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away,
and the whirlwind shall scatter them:
and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none,
and their tongue faileth for thirst,
I the Lord will hear them,
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

I will open rivers in high places,
and fountains in the midst of the valleys:
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
and the dry land springs of water.

I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree,
I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together.

That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together,
that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it (Isa. 41:8-20).

. . . And there it is! The promise of covenant! From amongst all of the peoples of the earth, Israel has been called, chosen, and will not be cast off. “Fear thou not, I am with thee . . . I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” It has been thought that the right hand is the “covenant hand,” and is therefore used in sustaining Church officials, entering into sacred covenants and obligations, and in partaking of the sacrament (see Elder Russell M. Nelson, *Ensign*, March 1983, “I Have a Question”). (See also *Topical Guide*, Right Hand). By twice using this terminology (vs 10, 13), the Lord is affirming the covenant that He has made with His people. In fulfillment of that covenant, the Lord promises (vs10):

- I am with thee
- I am thy God
- I will strengthen thee
- I will help thee
- I will uphold thee

The use of the term “redeemer” in verse 14 has great significance. The Parry brothers explain:

A redeemer had a legal meaning in ancient Israel: he was responsible to take a helpless relative’s obligations on his own shoulders (Lev. 25:25; Num. 5:8). to avenge a murder (Num. 35:12; Deut. 19:6), to care for a dead relative’s widow (Ruth 3-4), or to purchase one’s release from debtor’s prison. Such is the relationship of the Lord with us (Gen. 48:16): he will care for our needs, avenge us, and release us from bondage, especially the bondage of our sins (*Understanding Isaiah*, 354).

Although the Lord refers to Jacob, or Israel, as a “worm” (vs. 14) by comparison to the majesty, power and faithfulness of God, He reassures them that those that fight against Israel will be ashamed, confounded and come to nothing. This is the ultimate promise of the covenant; in the end, only those who have accepted the gospel covenants, and entered into the family of Israel will have eternal life as defined in D&C 132:

Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins . . .
which were to continue so long as they were in the world; and as touching Abraham and

his seed, out of the world they should continue; both in the world and out of the world should they continue as innumerable as the stars; or if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them.

This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself (D&C 132:30-31).

Israel is called and chosen for more than to receive blessings. “Thou art my servant” the Lord reminds us (vs 9), and called upon to take the covenant invitation and blessings to the rest of the world. In this work, the Lord promises that Israel will have increased power for threshing, or reaping. The Parry brothers explain:

To help us, the house of Israel, to fulfill our mission, the Lord will make us into a new threshing instrument. Most threshing instruments work best on level ground, but this special threshing tool, because it is created by the Lord, is capable of threshing hills and mountains, a seemingly impossible task. That means that we, the house of Israel, are capable of performing impossible works through the power of God, who created us. Part of our goal, through harvesting the white fields (D&C 4), is to seek out the honest in heart. Eventually the gathering will separate the righteous from the wicked, just as the wheat is separated from the tares (*Understanding Isaiah*, 354).

One of the promises of the covenant is land that is rich and bountiful for the children of Israel. Anciently, prophets referred to the Promised Land of Israel as a land “flowing with milk and honey” (Deut. 26:9, Jer. 32:22, Numb. 14:8). In our own Dispensation, the Lord has renewed the promises:

And I have made the earth rich, and behold it is my footstool, wherefore, again I will stand upon it.

And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh;

And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.

And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away (D&C 38:17-20).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie described four of the stages the earth has gone through and will yet go through:

Edenic earth. Following its physical creation, the earth was pronounced *good*. It was a *terrestrial* or *paradisiacal* state. There was no death either for man or for any form of life, and ‘all the vast creation of animated beings breathed naught but health, and peace, and joy’ (2 Ne. 2:22; *Voice of Warning*, pp. 89-91).

Telestial earth. When Adam fell, the earth fell also and became a mortal sphere, one upon which worldly and carnal people can live. This condition was destined to continue for a period of 6,000 years, and it was while in this state that the earth was baptized in water (D&C 77:6-7, 12; *Man: His Origin and Destiny*, pp. 415-436, 460-466).

Terrestrial earth. 'We believe . . . that the earth will be *renewed* and receive its *paradisiacal glory*.' (Tenth Article of Faith) Thus, the earth is to go back to the primeval, paradisiacal, or terrestrial state that prevailed in the days of the Garden of Eden. Accompanying this transition to its millennial status the earth is to be burned, that is, receive its baptism of fire. It will then be a new heaven and a new earth, and again health, peace, and joy will prevail upon its face (D&C 101:23-32; Isa. 65:17-25; Mal. 3:1-6; 4:1-6; *Man: His Origin and Destiny*, pp. 380-397).

Celestial earth. Following the millennium plus 'a little season' (D&C 29:22-25), the earth will die, be resurrected, and becoming like a 'sea of glass' (D&C 130:7), attain unto 'its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state' (D&C 77:1-2). Then the poor and the meek - that is, the god fearing and the righteous - shall inherit the earth; it will become an abiding place for the Father and the Son, and celestial beings will possess it forever and ever (D&C 88:14-26, 111) (*Mormon Doctrine*, p 211).

The statement that there will be no curse on the land when the Lord comes (see D&C 38:18) refers to the terrestrial earth during the Millennium, whereas the promise that the Saints will possess it during eternity (see D&C 38:18) reflects the earth's eventual celestial state (as quoted in *The Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, pp. 75-79).

Verses 18-19 of Isaiah 41 refers to the Lord's creation of a land of promise for His covenant people. The list of seven trees in verse 19 is symbolic; the Parry brothers believe that the different kinds of trees represent different kinds of "individuals that will drink deeply from the living water of 41:18" (*Understanding Isaiah*, 355).

The remaining verses of chapter 41 (vs 21-29) parallel chapter 40:18-28, wherein the Lord invites the false gods to prophesy of the future, or to move or to act in any way. "To whom will ye liken me?" the Lord has challenged, and then has made the case that nothing and no one can be compared to Him. All is "vanity, wind and confusion" when compared to God and His works (Isa. 41:29). Isa. 42:17 states that "They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods."

Chapter 42 introduces one of four "Servant Songs" of Isaiah. Victor Ludlow explains:

The first four verses of Isaiah 42 comprise one of the four "major songs" or major poetic passages in which Isaiah describes a servant of the Lord (the other three are Isa. 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). This servant is not named, so readers and scholars often disagree about the servant's identity. Generally, the Jewish scholars believe the servant is either the prophet Isaiah or a representation of the people of Israel in their chosen role as the Lord's servants to the world. Christian scholars usually believe Jesus Christ is the servant prophesied by Isaiah. Latter-day Saint readers often recognize that the covenant members of the restored gospel serve as the Lord's servants. They as a people, and the prophet of the restoration, Joseph Smith, may be identified as Isaiah's promised servant.

In order to understand how any of these identities are possible; twelve major characteristics of the servant will be listed as described by Isaiah:

1. The Lord calls the servant, attests to his authority, and foretells his coming (see Isa. 42:1, 8-9, 42:6; compare 49:1, 3; 50:4, 10).
2. God foreordains the servant, preserving him to come forth at a specific time and clothing him with the Spirit of God (see Isa. 42:6; 42:1; compare 49:1, 2, 5; see also Jer. 1:5).
3. The servant is *beloved* of God (see Isa. 42:1).
4. The servant is taught from on high; though uneducated after the manner of the world, he is an articulate spokesman for truth (see JST Isa. 50:4-5, 7; 49:2).
5. The servant is refined and sanctified through suffering and adversity. Though hated and persecuted by his own people, he will prevail over all his enemies, for the result of his work will be everlasting (see Isa. 50:5-6; 49:2, 7; 42:4, 6; compare 49:4-5; 50:7-9, 11).
6. The servant does not use violence or coercion, but preaches peace through gentle persuasion (see Isa. 42:2-3; 50:6).
7. The servant is raised up at a time when Israel is scattered. he is sent to the house of Israel and leads those in spiritual darkness to light (see Isa. 49:5; 42:6-7; 49:8; 50:10; 49:6).
8. The servant's mission extends to the entire world (see Isa. 42:1, 4; 49:6; 50:10-11).
9. The servant establishes a covenant with the chosen people (see Isa. 42:6; 49:8).
10. The servant prompts kings and princes to righteousness through the great power given him by the Lord (see Isa. 49:7).
11. The servant paves the way for those in spirit prison to hear the true gospel and be freed (see Isa. 49:9; 42:7).
12. The servant comes prior to the Millennium and is instrumental in the final redemption of Zion. His mission is significant, for it prepares the way for the renewal of Jerusalem and the return of Zion (see Isa. 49:8; 9-13).

As noted in the many references above, strong scriptural support can be gathered for the five possible identities of Isaiah's prophesied servant: ancient Israel, restored Israel, Isaiah, Jesus Christ, and Joseph Smith. Rather than categorically stating that Isaiah's servant songs apply only to one servant, we might be wise in recognizing that the characteristics of God's servant are best exemplified in Christ and are also demonstrated through the lives of all of God's righteous children. In short, the precise identity of the servant is not as important as studying his characteristics and seeking to develop them in our own lives (*Isaiah, Prophet, Seer and Poet*, pp. 358-360).

Isaiah wrote:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold;
mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth;
I have put my spirit upon him:
he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

A bruised reed shall he not break,
and the smoking flax shall he not quench:
he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth:
and the isles shall wait for his law.

Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out;
he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it;
he that giveth breath unto the people upon it,
and spirit to them that walk therein:

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness,
and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee,
and give thee for a covenant of the people,
for a light of the Gentiles;

To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison,
and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

I am the Lord: that is my name:
and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images (Isa. 42:1-8).

The Old Testament Student Manual offers the following insight into “The Servant”:

Only one servant was given power of judgment (see v. 1; compare Rom. 14:10; 2 Nephi 9:41), and that is He upon whose law the isles shall wait (see Isa. 42:4; 51:5; 60:9), the Mediator of Israel and the Savior of the Gentiles. He did not cry or lift up His voice in the streets, that is, raise a great tumult and boast in His own ways. Matthew cited this passage in Isaiah after noting that the Savior charged the multitudes not to make His healings known (see Matt. 12:15-21), for His was not an earthly kingdom wherein His voice and His works and wonders were to be heralded abroad; rather, His was a heavenly kingdom (see John 18:33-37). Thus, He withdrew from multitudes and avoided the honors of men, and He ministered with meekness and gentleness. The spirit of judgment was to be withheld until the Day of Judgment, at which time Christ will claim victory as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15).

The imagery of the bruised reed and smoking flax (see v. 3) means that even though He comes in judgment, it is not to destroy souls but to save them. The phrase “smoking flax” was translated by C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch as a “glimmering wick.” They explained

its use as follows: "In the statement that in such a case as this He does not completely break or extinguish, there is more implied than is really expressed. Not only will He not destroy the life that is dying out, but He will actually save it; His course is not to destroy, but to save" (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 7:2:176).

The phrase "he shall bring forth judgment unto truth" that immediately follows the reference to the reed and the flax was interpreted by Keil and Delitzsch "as denoting such a knowledge, and acknowledgment of the true facts in the complicated affairs of men, as will promote both equity and kindness" (*Commentary* 7:2:176).

The Parry brothers add:

The prophecy finds fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Matt. 12:17-21). God the Father calls Jesus *my servant*, *mine elect* (chosen), and says *my soul delighteth* in him; also, the statement "I have put my spirit upon him" was fulfilled, in part, at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:16-17); the phrase in Isaiah, *he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles*, another reference to Jesus, indicates that he will deal justly with the Gentiles by providing a way for them to enter into a covenant relationship with God.

He shall not cry . . . nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. Biblical commentators Keil and Delitzsch write concerning the phrase: "Although [the Lord] is certain of His divine call, and brings to the nations the highest and best, His manner of appearing is nevertheless quiet, gentle, and humble; the very opposite of those lying teachers, who endeavored to exalt themselves by noisy demonstrations. He does not seek His own, and therefore denies Himself; He brings what commends itself, and therefore requires no forced trumpeting."

A bruised reed shall he not break . . . smoking flax shall he not quench. A reed is a marsh plant with tall, hollow stems. A bruised reed is one that is cracked, and therefore is weak. Symbolically, *a bruised reed* may be a mortal with physical weaknesses or bodily afflictions. *A smoking flax* is a wick made from flax for an oil lamp, whose flame wavers, about to go out. This may signify someone who is spiritually weak, whose light flickers and does not burn brightly. Jesus healed and cared for the physically infirm (bruised reed), and he taught and guided the spiritually weak (smoking flax). A reed requires much water for it to grow properly; a flax or wick burns brightly when it has sufficient oil. Symbolically, Jesus Christ (as the waters of life) provides water to the reed, and (as the Anointed One) provides oil to the wick.

42:6 The verse makes five statements about Jesus Christ's mission: he was *called . . . in righteousness*, God will guide Jesus (*hold [his] hand*), God will protect him (*keep [him]*), Jesus will be *a covenant of the people* ("i.e., the means through whom people will come into a covenant relationship with the Lord") and he will be a *light of the Gentiles* (see also 49:8-9; D&C 45:9).

bring out the prisoners. The prisoners are those who dwell in spirit prison (1 Pet. 3:19-20; D&C 76:73-74). Christ opened the way for the prisoners to be taught and provided them with the opportunity to be freed from prison. Joseph Smith said: "It is very evident from this that He [Jesus] not only went to preach to them [those in the spirit world], but to deliver, or bring them out of the prison house" (*Understanding*

Isaiah, pp 359-361).

The Old Testament Student Manual explains “Who is the light that opens the eyes of the blind?”

Isaiah’s frame of reference shifts from the Father’s relationship with His Son to the Savior’s relationship with covenant Israel, particularly with those who would respond to the gospel invitation and be qualified to sing the song of the exalted (both living and dead). When mortals who are blind because they lack gospel light embrace the gospel, they are as prisoners set free.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was speaking of the crucified Christ when he said: “Here then we have an account of our Savior preaching to the spirits in prison, to spirits that had been imprisoned from the days of Noah; and what did He preach to them? That they were to stay there? Certainly not! Let his own declaration testify (Luke 4:18; Isa. 42:7). It is very evident from this that He not only went to preach to them, but to deliver, or bring them out of the prison house . . . Thus we find that God will deal with all the human family equally, and that as the antediluvians (those who lived before the Flood) had their day of visitation, so will those characters referred to by Isaiah, have their time of visitation and deliverance, after having been many days in prison” (*History of the Church*, 4:596-97).

Everything centers in the Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the light of the world and “of the gentiles” (Isa. 42:6). His hand is extended to strengthen, support, and protect covenant Israel; but that is not all. Every covenant person becomes a light to the world by holding up the light of the Savior through faithfully living His commandments (see 3 Ne. 18:24; see also Acts 26:17-18).

Abraham renewed his covenant with the Lord on multiple occasions, and set a pattern for us to follow, We, too, must renew and remember our covenants, we have the opportunity to do so each sabbath as we partake of the sacrament.

On one occasion, after many years had passed and the promise of children and land had still not been realized, the Lord “came to Abraham in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen. 15:1). This statement accords beautifully with Isaiah 41-42, and gives further clarity to the meaning of covenant. Jesus Christ is our shield, AND He is our reward. He is also the token, sign, or evidence of the covenant itself. In the same encounter, Abraham asked the Lord how he could know that the Lord would keep his promises. The Lord answered Abraham by commanding him to take certain animals, and to cut and sacrifice them in a very particular manner (see Gen. 15:8-18). This sign - sacrifice, with the animals giving their lives - is *the* sign of THE sacrifice: that of the Savior and Redeemer of the world, Jesus Christ. How shall we know that the Lord will keep His covenants with us? We know through the sacrifice and Atonement of Jesus Christ. He has kept His word and promise given before the foundations of the earth were laid, and by that sacrifice and Atonement, we know that all that He has promised will yet come to pass.

We are a covenant people. May we honor our covenants, *and the Lord*, through whose grace and mercy we live, breathe, and have hope.