

Isaiah and the Temple

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The purpose of this class is to examine various passages in the Book of Isaiah and note the temple symbolism that is found therein. The main divisions of the discussion have been taken from Hugh Nibley's book, The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: an Egyptian Endowment. They point out the major divisions of the temple ordinances as they were known in ancient Egypt, where the order which was established by the fathers in the first generations was earnestly imitated (Abraham 1:26). This will serve two purposes: 1) it will give some order to the verses to be discussed, and 2) there are many parallels which will be apparent to those who are acquainted with the modern temple ceremony of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The intended class is a group of mature members of the church, such as an Elders quorum or gospel doctrine class, who have for the most part been to the temple.

PURIFICATION RITES

The purification rite is initiatory in nature and precedes all important rites.

Washing and Anointing

In the ordinance of the endowment different parts of the body are washed and anointed, told what they should be used for, and a spiritual quality is equated with them.

Isaiah 1:16

Isaiah 30:25

The high mountains and lofty hills, as in Isaiah 2:2, are symbolic of the temple. Streams of running water are the

cleansing, reviving, and purifying waters that are used in the temple ordinances of washing and baptism for the dead. For other references to streams in relation to the temple, see Ezekiel 47:1(1-12) and Genesis 2:10 where the Garden of Eden is the temple where God first came to commune with and instruct his children.

Isaiah 33:15

Part of body

feet

mouth

head

hands

ears

eyes

Action

walking

speaking

wagging "no"

shaking

closing

shutting

Spiritual quality

righteousness

morality

integrity

honesty

justice

virtue

(IPSP, p.298)

Clothing

Just as Adam and Eve were clothed in a garment when they left the Garden of Eden, so are those clothed who enter into the temple.

Isaiah 61:10

"The 'turban' (NJV) or 'ornaments' (KJV) of the groom comes from the Hebrew term pe'er, which is used to describe the priestly mitre or cap in Ex. 39:28 and Ezek. 44." (IPSP, p. 506)

New name

Along with the washing, anointing and clothing the initiate is given a new name.

Isaiah 62:2

Questions and/or Comments

THE CREATION OF MAN

"A fundamental religious activity of the ancient Hebrews was

going up to the Temple 'to read the Story of the Creation'." (MJSP, p. 131) This influence can be seen in the writings of Isaiah. Of the slightly more than fifty occurrences of the word 'bara' (create) in the Old Testament, nearly half are in Isaiah 40-56. (IPSP, p. 343-4)

Isaiah 45:12

Isaiah 40:12

The Ritual Meal

The ritual or sacramental meal takes place after a rebirth. It thus could be performed after the creation of man, or his resurrection, or after baptism or the purification rites as in the early Christian church. (MJSP, p. 143) With reference to the temple ideology of the ancient Near East, John Lundquist states, "sacral, communal meals are carried out in connection with temple ritual, often at the conclusion of or during a covenant ceremony." (IATP, p. 37.) This meal provides both a sacrifice and a communion.

The prime example of the ritual meal is to be found in the happenings of Mt. Sinai.

Exodus 24:11

For other references to the ritual, sacramental meal see Leviticus 24:9 (BD-Shewbread), 1 Kings 8:65, and Mark 14:25.

References to this ritual meal in the temple are found in Isaiah in the following verses.

Isaiah 62:9

Isaiah 25:6

The meal referred to here is probably the same one referred

to by the Savior in the parable of the marriage of the king's son, in Matthew 22, in Mark 15:24, and in Luke 14:15, which state that the meal is to take place in the Kingdom of the Father following the resurrection.

Questions and/or Comments

THE LONG ROAD BACK

Because man is in a fallen state, a way has been prepared for him to return to his former estate of glory. According to Brigham Young, the purpose of the endowment is "to enable [one] to walk back to the presence of the Father" (DBY, p. 637). The road which leads back to the Father is often called by names such as the way of life and salvation, the way of right, the way of holiness, etc.

The Way of Life and Salvation

Isaiah 35:8

Isaiah 62:10

Covenants

The way to progress on this highway is by entering into covenants.

Isaiah 2:3

This passage could be reworded to read, "Come, let us go to the temple, to learn of the covenants of the Lord so we may enter into these covenants."

Isaiah 61:8

Isaiah 1:11

The first law or covenant entered into is obedience which is

followed by sacrifice. See 1 Samuel 15:22

Isaiah 44:5

"Although this might be a literal act, it is probably symbolic of using that hand to establish covenants or promises...The hand could be used in a sign, token, or witness of a person's promises and covenants with God." (IPSP, p. 378)

With reference to the casting of Satan out of heaven we read that they (the angels) "removed the writing of authority from his hand. They took from him his armor and all the insignia of priesthood and kingship." (DA)

The authority received by entering into the covenants is the authority to officiate in the ordinances of the priesthood.

Prayer

The Prayer Circle is another essential part of the temple ordinances and in the journey on the highway of Holiness.

Isaiah 61:1-2

"A common practice in temple prayers is to exercise faith on behalf of the sick, afflicted, and others who mourn." (IPSP, p. 509)

The guide

The guide that directs the initiate in the way of holiness is a prominent theme in the Egyptian temple ordinances. This idea is also found in the Book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:14

Another passage which has reference to both the guide and the prayer circle is the following.

Isaiah 57:18

Questions and/or Comments

THE FEARFUL PASSAGE

In the fearful passage, the initiate passes through the realm of the Dead, through several gates, and endures a full scale trial in a divine court of law.

Isaiah 62:10

To return to the Father we will have to pass through gates which are guarded by sentinel angels and gods, and give them the key words, signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood. See John 10:9, 2 Nephi 9:41, D&C 132:19, and DBY, p. 637.

Isaiah 43:2

Fire and water are "general metaphors for danger" (NCB, p. 82), and are thus appropriate symbols for the passage through the Underworld and through the closely guarded gates. Also, fire and water are equated with the veil which separates us from the presence of God. Hugh Nibley writes: "(Water) is par excellence the medium of passage: half-way between solid matter and tenuous spirit, it enables bodies to move from one place to another in a state of effortless motion and silent suspension, visibly hovering between the solid earth below and the empty sky above." (MJSP, p. 94)

trial scenes

The judgement of the initiate is another prominent part in the temple ideology of the ancient Near East. For examples of the divine trial in Isaiah, see Isaiah 43:8-13, 22-28; 50:1-13

Questions and/or Comments

CULMINATION AND CONCLUSION

The culmination and conclusion involves the overcoming of death, passing through the veil of the temple and seeing and conversing with the Lord.

Isaiah 66:18

The fulfillment of this promise was carefully recorded as it was fulfilled in the case of Isaiah in the following passage.

Isaiah 6:1-4

Many parallels can be drawn between this passage and the symbols of the temple ordinances. For example:

seraphs] guides and guards

the skirts of His robe] the temple veil

Holy, holy, holy] a threefold petition for admittance

the doorposts would shake] movement at the veil

I beheld my Lord] the return to the presence of the Lord

Questions and/or Comments

CONCLUSION AND TESTIMONY

I hope that this lesson will have given the class some new insights into the Book of Isaiah and the temple experience.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

- DA "Discourse of the Abbaton, a sermon based on the text delivered by Timothy the Archbishop of Alexandria", as found in Enoch the Prophet, Hugh Nibley, p. 173.
- DBY Discourses of Brigham Young, John A. Widstoe.
- IATP Isaiah and the Prophets, John Lundquist.
- IPSP Isaiah: Prophet, Seer and Poet, Victor Ludlow.
- MJSP Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: an Egyptian Endowment, Hugh Nibley.
- NCB New Century Bible: Isaiah 40-66, Whybray.

HANDOUT

- I. Purification rites
 - A. Washing and Anointing
Isaiah 1:16, 30:25, 33:15
other references - Ezekiel 47:1(1-12), Genesis 2:10
 - B. Clothing
Isaiah 61:10
other references - Exodus 39:28, Ezekiel 44:17-19
 - C. New name
Isaiah 62:2

- II. The creation of Man
 - A. Creation
Isaiah 45:12, 40:12
 - B. The ritual meal
Isaiah 62:9, 25:6
other references - Exodus 24:11, Leviticus 24:9,
1 Kings 8:65

- III. The long road back
 - A. The way of life and salvation
Isaiah 35:8, 62:10
 - B. Covenants
Isaiah 2:3, 61:8, 1:11, 44:5
other references - 1 Samuel 15:22
 - C. Prayer
Isaiah 61:2
 - D. The guide
Isaiah 40:14, 57:18

- IV. The fearful passage
 - A. Through the gates
Isaiah 62:10, 43:2
other references - John 10:9, 2 Nephi 9:41, D&C 132:19
 - B. The trial
Isaiah 43:8-13, 22-28; 50:1-13

- V. Culmination and conclusion
 - A. Return to God's presence
Isaiah 66:18, 6:1-4