

**Be Strong, Fear Not: Your God Will Come With Vengeance,
He Will Come And Save You (Isa. 35:4)**

Come near, ye nations, to hear;
and hearken, ye people:
let the earth hear, and all that is therein;
the world, and all things that come forth of it.

For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations,
and his fury upon all their armies:
he hath utterly destroyed them,
he hath delivered them to the slaughter (Isa. 34:1-2).

Is the indignation of the Lord really upon *all* nations? A common reaction to this verse is a sense of disbelief; how is it possible that *my* nation will fall under this condemnation, one might ask. There is a similar response to a related prophesy recorded by Zechariah that *all* nations will turn to fight against Jerusalem:

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle;
and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished;
and half of the city shall go forth into captivity,
and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations,
as when he fought in the day of battle (Zech. 14:2-3)

The two prophecies are linked as pertaining to the time of the battle called Armageddon. The *Old Testament Student Manual* provides the following information:

It is not surprising, considering its great importance in the winding-up scenes of the earth's telestial existence, to find that the prophets, ancient and modern, have spoken at great lengths and in much detail about this final war that will usher in the Millennium. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, John, Joseph Smith, and others have all talked about the battle and the events associated with it. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, after quoting from several of these prophets, said: "Now I have read these passages of Scripture from these various prophets. Here you will find Isaiah saying the Lord will pour out war upon all the world; Jeremiah saying the same thing and speaking of these terrible things; Daniel saying so; Ezekiel saying so. We find Joel, Zephaniah, Zechariah, all proclaiming that in this last day, the day when the sun shall be darkened and the moon turned to blood and the stars fall from heaven, that the nations of the earth would gather against Jerusalem. All of them speak of it; and when that time comes, the Lord is going to come out of His hiding place." (*The Signs of the Times*, p. 170.)

From the earliest days, the valley of Armageddon, or the Plain of Esdraelon, has been the site of great battles. It has felt the tramp of Egyptian foot soldiers, heard the shouts of Assyrian battalions, witnessed the passing of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian troops, watched as Jewish guerrillas fought Roman legionnaires, heard the cries of Crusaders and Moslems locked in battle, and has felt the crunch of Israeli troops maneuvering against Arab forces. Megiddo: "the place of

troops.” One would be hard pressed to find a more appropriate name for this tiny area of the world’s geography.

And one would be hard put to find a more appropriate name for the last great battle of the world before the Savior comes. It was John who named it when he said: “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (Rev. 16:16). From that statement the name has come to be applied to the entire great war, although the phrase “battle of Armageddon” is not found in the scriptures. Some erroneously conclude that the final battle of the war will be fought there, but, as Elder Bruce R. McConkie pointed out, the final struggles will center around Jerusalem, though they may extend to Megiddo.

“Some 60 air miles north of Jerusalem lies the ancient city of *Megiddo* (now called Tell el-Mutesellim). In its north-central Palestinian location, Megiddo overlooks the great Plain of Esdraelon, an area of some 20 by 14 miles in which many great battles took place anciently. Megiddo is the older Hebrew form of *Armageddon* or *Har-Magedon* meaning the Mount or Hill of Megiddo, or the Hill of Battles; it is ‘the valley of *Megiddon*’ mentioned in Zechariah (Zech. 12:11).

“At the very moment of the Second Coming of our Lord, ‘all nations’ shall be gathered ‘against Jerusalem to battle’ (Zech. 11; 12; 13; 14), and the *battle of Armageddon* (obviously covering the entire area from Jerusalem to Megiddo, and perhaps more) will be in progress. As John expressed it, ‘the kings of the earth and of the whole world’ will be gathered ‘to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, ... into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.’ Then Christ will ‘come as a thief,’ meaning unexpectedly, and the dramatic upheavals promised to accompany his return will take place. (Rev. 16:14–21.) It is incident to this battle of Armageddon that the Supper of the Great God shall take place (Rev. 19:11–18), and it is the same battle described by Ezekiel as the war with Gog and Magog. (Ezek. 38; 39; *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, p. 45.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 74.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith indicated that this great war would be one of the last events before Christ comes in His glory: “One thing we are given by these prophets definitely to understand is that the great last conflict before Christ shall come will end at the siege of Jerusalem. ...” “So we are given to understand that when the armies gather in Palestine will be the time when the Lord shall come in judgment and to make the eventful decision which will confound the enemies of his people and establish them in their ancient land forever.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:46–47.)

Obviously, this is an event of great importance to the world, and the Lord has given a wealth of detail so that those who will listen can be prepared and comforted as the greatest war in the history of the world begins to unfold (pp. 291-95).

We have additional modern scripture that confirms the message:

I have sworn, and the decree hath gone forth by a former commandment which I have given unto you, that I would let fall the sword of mine indignation in behalf of my people; and even as I have said, it shall come to pass.

Mine indignation is soon to be poured out without measure upon all nations; and this will I do when the cup of their iniquity is full (D&C 101:10-11).

Orson Pratt explained the means by which all nations will be gathered together in the battle against Jerusalem:

It will be partly through the aid of false religionists working miracles that so many people join in this unholy alliance (see Rev. 13:11-15; 19:20). Elder Orson Pratt taught that “so great will be the darkness resting upon Christendom, and so great the bonds of priestcraft with which they will be bound, that they will not understand, and they will be given up to the hardness of their hearts. Then will be fulfilled that saying, That the day shall come when the Lord shall have power over his Saints, and the Devil shall have power over his own dominion. He will give them up to the power of the Devil, and he will have power over them, and he will carry them about as chaff before a whirlwind. He will gather up millions upon millions of people into the valleys around about Jerusalem in order to destroy the Jews after they have gathered. How will the Devil do this? He will perform miracles to do it. The Bible says the kings of the earth and the great ones will be deceived by these false miracles. It says there shall be three unclean spirits that shall go forth working miracles, and they are spirits of devils. Where do they go? To the kings of the earth; and what will they do? Gather them up to battle unto the great day of God Almighty. Where? Into the valley of Armageddon.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 7:189.)

The Parry brothers introduce Isaiah 34 with this explanation:

Isaiah 34 applies directly to our time, the last days, because the prophecies in that chapter will occur when the Lord comes in his glory to the earth. Some of our generations may witness the slaughter of the wicked, as described in 34:1-8, or we may see the burning of the earth as set forth in 34:9-15; 34:16-17 alludes to the blessings of eternal marriage.

Isaiah prophesies to all the peoples of the earth, as signaled by his use of the words *nations, people, the earth, and the world* in 34:1. His message is plain: the Lord is angry with the nations of the earth and their armies; therefore, he is going to destroy them at his second coming. Isaiah’s words regarding the destruction are vivid and descriptive - *utterly destroyed, slaughter, slain, carcasses, blood, filled with blood, sacrifice, and soaked with blood*. In addition, Isaiah’s terminology recalls animal sacrifice at the Lord’s temple: *slaughter, blood, fat, blood of lambs and goats, and fat of the kidneys of rams*. The Lord is going to destroy the nations as if they were sacrificial animals.

Isaiah’s symbolism is clear to us: those who accept the Savior’s atoning sacrifice will be delivered from destruction, but those who reject his atonement will be slaughtered, as were the sacrificial animals of this temple. During all this slaughter, Jehovah will “uphold Zion’s cause” (NIV 34:8) and protect his Saints (*Understanding Isaiah*, 307).

Isaiah 34 continues:

Their slain also shall be cast out,
and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses,
and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved,
and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll:
and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine,

and as a falling fig from the fig tree.

For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.

The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.

And the wild oxen shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.

For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion (Isa. 34:3-8).

The Institute *Old Testament Student Manual* adds:

The Second Coming of Christ will be a day of vengeance and recompense. As formerly seen, "the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations," for "he hath delivered them to the slaughter" (Isaiah 34:2). Moreover, the heavenly bodies, those luminaries such as the sun, stars, and moon, "shall be dissolved," that is, "shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine" while "the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll" (v. 4). Isaiah's description is reminiscent of a similar one in Doctrine and Covenants 88:95 in which we are taught that when the Lord returns, "the curtain of heaven shall be unfolded, as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up, and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled." Then the sword of the Lord, which represents His power and judgment, "shall come down upon Idumea," or the world (Isaiah 34:5).

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "Now, some Bible commentators, because of the name of Idumea, a little country east of the Jordan, is mentioned, have an idea that this had reference to that little country; but the term Idumea is one that the Lord uses to mean the world. You will find it so recorded in Section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants. He is speaking of the world." (*The Signs of the Times*, p. 150.)

Blood is a biblical symbol of wickedness. The whole earth, stained with blood, will experience a "great slaughter" at the time of the Second Coming, for "it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion" (Isaiah 34:6, 8).

President Joseph Fielding Smith again: "That is to take place in the dispensation of the Fulness of Times, and this prophecy had nothing to do with that little country called Idumea but to the nations of the earth" (*Signs of the Times*, p. 151).

Isaiah seems to parallel passages in Ezekiel, Joel, and Jeremiah where the great battle of Armageddon is foretold. This parallelism explains the reference to the "armies" (Isaiah 34:2) and the vast slaughter that will take place (see vv. 3, 5-7). The "pitch" and "brimstone" and "smoke" of verses 9 and 10 suggest the results of nuclear warfare, which could logically accompany the last great wars. (See Enrichment I *Old Testament Student Manual*, for more detail on the battle of Armageddon.)

The Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual adds:

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “Those with refined senses find it difficult to conceive of the desolation, destruction, and death that will prevail during the final great battles ushering in Christ’s reign of peace. So great shall be the slaughter and mass murder, the carnage and gore, the butchery and violent death of warring men, that their decaying bodies ‘shall stop the noses of the passengers,’ and it shall be a task of mammoth proportions merely to dispose of them. Then shall Ezekiel’s prophecy be fulfilled that every feathered fowl and every beast of the field shall assemble to ‘eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth.’ (Ezek. 39.) And then shall the cry go forth of which John wrote: ‘Come and gather yourselves together unto the *supper of the great God*; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.’ (Rev. 19:17–18.) That all this is an actual, literal supper, an horrible but real event yet to be, has been specifically confirmed in latter-day revelation. (D. & C. 29:18–21.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 772.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “I know these are unpleasant things. It is not a pleasant thing even for me to stand here and tell you that this is written in the Scriptures. If the Lord has a controversy with the nations, He will put them to the sword. Their bodies shall lie unburied like dung upon the earth. That is not nice, is it, but should we not know it? Is it not our duty to read these things and understand them? Don’t you think the Lord has given us these things that we might know and we might prepare ourselves through humility, through repentance, through faith, that we might escape from these dreadful conditions that are portrayed by these ancient prophets? That is why I am reading them. I feel just as keenly as you do about the condition, and I pray for it to come to an end, but I want it to come to an end right.” (*Signs of the Times*, pp. 154–55.)

The figure of a cup full of indignation (see D&C 29:17) suggests that the Lord will no longer forbear taking vengeance on the wicked who will not repent. Just as there is a limit to the amount a cup can hold, so there is a limit to the amount of patience the Lord will show towards those who perform wicked acts. To restrain Himself longer would be a disservice to mankind for whom He has offered Himself as Savior. Since the blood of His Atonement will not cleanse those who do not repent, pestilence, famine, plague, and destruction are the tools He uses to reclaim those who are past feeling and will not hearken to the still, small voice (see 1 Ne. 17:45; D&C 43:20-27). These terrible judgments are the natural result of man’s wickedness. God’s plea is for people to turn from such wickedness and be spared these awful consequences of sin (pp.59-63).

Victor Ludlow adds the following information regarding the signs in the heavens:

The first phrase of verse 4 reads as follows in the King James Version: “And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved.” The “host of heaven” could refer either to heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars, etc.) or to celestial beings (spirits, angels, etc.) in God’s presence. The phrase “shall be dissolved” comes from a Hebrew word that also means “to dwindle” or “to decompose.” Thus the hosts of heaven dissolving could mean either that stars and planets will be destroyed or that there will be fewer beings in the Lord’s presence (since his spirit children come to earth to acquire mortal bodies and some do not return to him). Of course, other possibilities exist, but by combining the two suggestions above with verses 2 and 3, we end up with a more encompassing interpretation composed of two main concepts:

1. Both earthly nations and heavenly orbs will be destroyed or disrupted.
2. The earth's population will be decimated (as armies are destroyed), and the heavenly population will decrease (as spirits leave and do not return).

Joseph Smith prophesies of similar signs in the heavens and the earth in Doctrine and Covenants 29:15-16 and 45:39-43.

The second phrase of verse 4, "and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll" (KJV), is echoed in many other scriptures (See Morm. 5:23; 9:2; 3 Ne. 26:3; Rev. 6:14; D&C 88:95).

Three possible interpretations of this phrase can be supported by modern revelation recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:

1. The signs of the times preceding the Millennium will include manifestations in the heavens, such as thunder and lightning, darkness, darkened sun, red moon, and falling stars (D&C 43:25; 133:69; 88:87).
2. The records (or scrolls) of heaven will be sealed (or opened up) as the earth's inhabitants are judged from the heavenly records (some don't return to heaven) (D&C 77:8 and 128:7, 14).
3. The work of this celestial world will be completed, the veil over the earth will be removed, and the earth's inhabitants who have kept a terrestrial law will see Christ at his second coming (D&C 88:95; 101:23; see also *Hymns*, no 123).

It seems that Isaiah is prophesying about apocalyptic signs that will occur in the heavens during the last days. Through astounding, these phenomena will come about through such natural means that he portrays the events by comparing them to falling leaves and fruit. In other writings, he mentions more of these cataclysmic events and gives further details (Isa. 13:10; 24:23; 30:26; 50:3; 60:19-20; 65:17) (*Isaiah, Prophet, Seer and Poet*, 307-8).

Isaiah continues:

And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch,
and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.

It shall not be quenched night nor day;
the smoke thereof shall go up for ever:
from generation to generation it shall lie waste;
none shall pass thought it for ever and ever.

But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it;
the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it:
and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness.

They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there,
and all her princes shall be nothing

And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof:

and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls.

The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island,
and the satyr shall cry to his fellow:
the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.

There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow:
there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate.

Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read:
no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate:
for my mouth it hath commanded,
and his spirit it hath gathered them.

And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line:
they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein (Isa. 34:9-17).

Victor Ludlow provides the following explanation:

Unusual birds and strange animals are mentioned in verses 11 and 14. Their exact identity is ambiguous, as can be demonstrated by comparing the NIV with the KJV and other versions. Although the exact meaning of the Hebrew terms is unknown, the picture Isaiah presents is graphic and symbolic.

In these verses, we see before us not only a desert wilderness, but also a dreadful desolation where sights and smells of burning sulfur and smoke offend our senses. Thorns and weeds inhibit movement, and strange creatures of the air and night bring foreboding to the heart. It is no wonder humans do not travel through the area (v. 10). Indeed, the destruction is so complete in this land that Isaiah borrows two rhyming terms (*tohu* and *bohu*) from Moses' story of the earth's desolate condition before it was organized: without form (confusion) and void (emptiness) (compare v. 10 with Gen. 1:2).

The land is not devoid of all life, however, only of human inhabitants. Having banished men from the area, the Lord transforms their cities and dwellings into nests for birds and dens for animals so that instead of these cities standing as monuments of human achievement, they become memorials of foolish ambition. The homes of men are occupied by animals whose wild dispositions resemble those of the original occupants (*Isaiah, Prophet Seer, Poet*, 310).

The *Old Testament Student Manual* asks: What Is the "Book of the Lord"?

Not all people, of course, are wicked, and those who are not will be saved from the destroying fire—both the spiritual (hell) and the physical (see 1 Nephi 22:15–17). The names of the children of the Lord who have kept their covenants are enrolled in a special book known as "the book of the Lord" (Isaiah 34:16), "the book of the law of God" (D&C 85:5; see also vv. 9, 11), or "the book of life" (Revelation 20:12). Records of our works are kept on earth by the Lord's clerks, but the book of life is the record kept in heaven. Both records should agree (see D&C 128:6–9). Of those whose names are recorded in the heavenly book, "no one of these shall fail" (Isaiah 34:16). The promise that "none shall want [lack] their mate" (JST, Isaiah 34:16) is particularly interesting to

Latter-day Saints since we know that only through the ordinance of celestial marriage can we have our mate eternally.

It's important to note the reason the Lord provides for pouring out slaughter and calamity upon the nations. The reason is given in verse 8 of chapter 34, and is worth our consideration:

For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance,
and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion (Isa. 34:8).

The Lord is fighting for Zion! - and against those who have attacked and troubled the cause of Zion throughout the ages. Although Zion has endured tribulation, and has sometimes cried out, wondering where her God was, and when deliverance would occur, the eye of the Lord has ever been on her, and will deliver her in her furthest extremities. The Lord promised Joseph Smith:

And now I give unto you a word concerning Zion. Zion shall be redeemed,
although she is chastened for a little season" (D&C 100:13).

Who *is* Zion? In a larger sense, the Lord has defined Zion as "the pure in heart" (D&C 97:21), but there are examples of specific cities of Zion that the Lord has used as a type or example to illustrate the eternal principles concerning Zion.

1. Enoch's city of Zion achieved a unity of heart and purpose unknown in any other society. That city and its inhabitants have become the model for all other Zion societies, and the citizens of that exalted city still have a part to play with the citizens of the earth in a future day. The Lord promised Noah:

"And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself.

"And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy;

"And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch.

"And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will establish my covenant unto thee, which I have made between me and thee, for every living creature of all flesh that shall be upon the earth.

"And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and thee; for all flesh that shall be upon the earth" (JST Gen. 9:21-25).

2. The term *Zion* has been used to represent the family of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem. Pertaining to Armageddon specifically, the "Zion" that the Lord is fighting for are the people who will be gathered in Israel, with an emphasis on the Jews, who despite having denied Him as Messiah, will be redeemed by Him in their darkest moment.

Zechariah's prophecy, quoted on the first page of this handout, continues:

Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations,
as when he fought in the day of battle.

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives,
which is before Jerusalem on the east,
and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west,
and there shall be a very great valley;
and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands?
Then he shall answer,
Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends (Zech 14:3-4; 13:6; D&C 45:51-52).

President Joseph Fielding Smith said: "Then they will accept Him as their Redeemer, which they have never been willing to do. Then is the time as spoken of in this passage from Zechariah when every family will go and mourn apart; the house of David, the house of Nathan, the Jews. They will fall down. They will rend their garments, and they will mourn and they will weep because they were not willing to accept the Son of God but accepted the teachings of their fathers and rejected their Redeemer and Messiah. Then they will fall down at His feet and worship Him. After these days will come their redemption and the building of Jerusalem. They will be given their own land again, and every man 'will live under his own vine and his own fig tree and they will learn to love the Lord and keep his commandments and walk in the light, and He will be their God and they will be His people, and that is right at our doors.'" (*Signs of the Times*, pp. 171-72.)

The Lord will fight for and preserve Israel because He has made a covenant to do so. Regardless of the judgments of others, the Lord considers the Jews "His people," and will defend them for His name's sake (see Isa. 48:9; Ezek. 20:13-14, 44). Samuel the prophet explained: "For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people" (1 Sam. 12:22). Because the Lord is everlastingly faithful to His covenants, He will perform His work as promised.

Isaiah 35 is full of promise, as Isaiah envisions Zion redeemed, and her ransomed people returned to live under the watchful care of the Lord.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them;
and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as a rose.

It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing;
the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon,
they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.

Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not:
behold, your God will come with vengeance,
even God with a recompense: he will come and save you.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Then shall the lame man leap as an hart,
and the tongue of the dumb sing:
for in the wilderness shall waters break out,
and streams in the desert.

And the parched ground shall become a pool,
and the thirsty land springs of water:
in the habitation of dragons, where each lay,
shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

And an highway shall be there,
for a way shall be cast up,
and it shall be called the way of holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over upon it;
but it shall be cast up for those who are clean,
and the wayfaring men, though they are accounted fools,
shall not err therein (JST corrections).

No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go thereon,
it shall not be found there;
but the redeemed shall walk there;

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads:
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isa. 35:1-10).

What is the “way of holiness” that leads the ransomed souls back to the safety of Zion? Surely it is the path that begins with baptism and leads to the House of the Lord, where those who will be redeemed enter into sacred and eternal covenants with God. The unclean shall not enter therein, nor will the fool understand the significance and value of such a path, “but the redeemed shall walk there . . . with songs of everlasting joy.”

As with the specific, and broader, versions of the term “Zion,” so the “way of holiness” has various applications. For some, the highway may literally be a geographical path to the cities of inheritance based upon their tribal family. Modern-day revelation speaks of yet another highway that will provide safe journey for a portion of the ten [lost] tribes:

And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh.

And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord;
and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves;
and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence.

And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep.

And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants.

And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence.

And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion,
by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim.

And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy.

Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel,
and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows.

And they also of the tribe of Judah, after their pain,
shall be sanctified in holiness before the Lord,
to dwell in his presence day and night, forever and ever (D&C 133:25-27, 30-35).

What is of import to us as individuals is the realization that the Lord has provided our own personal “way of holiness” for our return to His presence. Isaiah encourages us to “be strong, and fear not,” as we seek not only to find the path, but to continue on it despite what we may encounter in opposition.

We began this study by contemplating the thought that *all* nations would become involved in the fight against Zion. We find it nearly inconceivable, and cringe at the thought. It is reassuring, however, to know that the Lord has determined to fight for His people (and win), but that he also views Armageddon as an opportunity to gather *all* nations, and to plead with *all* nations for the sake of Zion:

For, behold, in those days, and in that time,
when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,

I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat,
and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel,
whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.

And they have cast lots for my people;
and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink (Joel 3:1-3).

The Lord loves His people, and even in the midst of war and devastation, the invitation is still extended for repentance and the opportunity to come unto Him in covenant.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained:

We do not know when the calamities and troubles of the last days will fall upon any of us as individuals or upon bodies of the Saints. The Lord deliberately withholds from us the day and hour of his coming and of the tribulations which shall precede it—all as part of the testing and probationary experiences of mortality. He simply tells us to watch and be ready.

We can rest assured that if we have done all in our power to prepare for whatever lies ahead, he will then help us with whatever else we need. ...

We do not say that all of the Saints will be spared and saved from the coming day of desolation. But we do say there is no promise of safety and no promise of security except for those who love the Lord and who are seeking to do all that he commands.

It may be, for instance, that nothing except the power of faith and the authority of the priesthood can save individuals and congregations from the atomic holocausts that surely shall be.

And so we raise the warning voice and say: Take heed; prepare; watch and be ready. There is no security in any course except the course of obedience and conformity and righteousness. (In Conference Report, Apr. 1979, pp. 132–133; or *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 93.)