
“LET THE METAPHORS
SPEAK TO YOU”

An LDS Commentary on Isaiah

ANN N. MADSEN

Dedicated to those who live in the time about which Isaiah prophesied

Isaiah 17

This chapter begins with a prophecy against Damascus and the first line describes precisely its fate: “Damascus will no longer be a city but will become a heap of ruins,” “deserted cities where flocks are safely living with no one to make them afraid.”

17:6. This verse compares the glory of Jacob’s fading power to heads of grain that have “yet some gleanings” as when an olive tree is beaten, leaving two or three olives on the topmost branches, which are deliberately left for the poor.

17:7–8. These verses are an abrupt change. “In that day, men will look to their Maker and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel. They will not look to the altars, the work of their hands, and they will have no regard for the Asherah poles (Asherah describes a female goddess whose image was often carved and painted similar to totem poles) and the incense altars their fingers have made. They have turned to God instead.

17:9. In that day, the Moabites’ strong cities will all be desolation.

17:11–12. In these verses we see the metaphor of “fine plants and imported vines” that you “bring to bud.” Yet, “the harvest will be as nothing in the day of disease and incurable pain.”

17:12–13. Verse 12 begins, “Oh the raging of many nations--they rage like the raging sea.” And verse 13 continues, “Although the peoples roar like surging waters, when He rebukes them, they flee far away.” This is reminiscent of the stories in the Gospels about Christ commanding the waters to be still.

17:14. “In the evening, sudden terror! Before the morning, they are gone! This is the portion of those who loot us. The lot of those who plunder us.” And thus ends the prophecy of the people who disdain the LORD.

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