

The Gospel According to

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

CHAPTER 3, VERSE 3	CHAPTER 1, VERSES 1-3	CHAPTER 3, VERSES 4-6	CHAPTER 1, VERSE 23
<p>3:3 - For this is he³⁷ that was spoken of³⁸ by the prophets⁸ Esaias¹⁶, saying, The voice¹⁷ of one crying¹⁸ in the wilderness¹⁹, Prepare ye²⁰ the way¹⁴ of the Lord²¹, make his paths²² straight²³.</p>	<p>1:1 - The beginning¹ of the gospel² of Jesus³ Christ⁴, the Son⁵ of God⁶; 1:2 - As it is written⁷ in the prophets⁸, Behold⁹, I send¹⁰ my messenger¹¹ before thy face¹², which shall prepare¹³ thy way¹⁴ before⁹ thee¹⁵. 1:3 - The voice¹⁷ of one crying¹⁸ in the wilderness¹⁹, Prepare ye²⁰ the way¹⁴ of the Lord²¹, make his paths²² straight²³.</p>	<p>3:4 - As it is written⁷ in the book of the words of Esaias¹⁶ the prophet⁸, saying, The voice¹⁷ of one crying¹⁸ in the wilderness¹⁹, Prepare ye²⁰ the way¹⁴ of the Lord²¹, make his paths²² straight²³. 3:5 - Every valley²⁴ shall be³⁰ filled²⁵, and every mountain²⁶ and hill²⁷ shall be³⁰ brought low²⁸; and the crooked²⁹ shall be³⁰ made straight²³, and the rough ways³¹ shall be³⁰ made smooth³²; 3:6 - And all³³ flesh³⁴ shall see³⁵ the salvation³⁶ of God⁶.</p>	<p>1:23 - He said, I am the voice¹⁵ of one crying¹⁸ in the wilderness¹⁹, Make straight the way¹⁴ of the Lord²¹, as said the prophets⁸ Esaias¹⁶.</p>

CHRONOLOGY: Between 23 October 26CE and 27 November 26CE (Emperor or Caesar Tiberius began his reign as "principate" of Rome on 18 September 14CE. It is recorded that John began his ministry in or during the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius. That gives us a one year window for the dating of this chapter. This would place the date of Jesus birth at 1BCE, however, he was made co-regent with Augustus, by the Roman Senate, starting on the 23rd October 12CE, after returning victorious from Germania. He was co-regent over some of the provinces starting in 11CE. Adjusting the date for co-regency moves the birth year of Jesus to 3BCE or 4BCE, as the start of one's reign is typically counted from the point of any co-regency. One last variable needs to be introduced. The 15th year could be the year starting with the 14th anniversary and ending with the 15th.)

Co-Regency Theory

23 October 12CE + 15 years = 23 October 27BCE - 29 ½ years = April 3BCE (Birth of Jesus Christ)
 23 October 12CE + 15 years = 23 October 27BCE + 3 ½ years = April 31BCE (Death of Jesus Christ)

or

Co-Regency "15th year" Theory

23 October 12CE + 14 years = 23 October 26BCE - 29 ½ years = April 4BCE (Birth of Jesus Christ)
 23 October 12CE + 14 years = 23 October 26BCE + 3 ½ years = April 30BCE (Death of Jesus Christ)

or

Talmage Theory

18 September 14CE + 15 years = 18 September 29BCE - 29 ½ years = April 1BCE (Birth of Jesus Christ)
 18 September 14CE + 15 years = 18 September 29BCE + 3 ½ years = April 33BCE (Death of Jesus Christ)

"It is summer time. We are in Judea. The year is A.D. 26. In six months Jesus will begin his ministry, but for now the day belongs to John." (The Mortal Messiah, Volume 1, Collector's edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 249). I suppose we could use the theory that best suits our need; however, that is no way to establish truth. The problem we have is that there are too many unknowns to precisely even identify the year for this chapter. Fitzmyer explains the problem very clearly. He wrote, "Five problematic factors complicate the reckoning and have to be admitted: (a) Did Luke begin his reckoning of Tiberius' regnal years from the co-regency of Tiberius (with Augustus) over certain provinces, dated to A.D. 11 (=A.U.C. 764) by Velleius Paterculus (2.121) or to A.D. 12 (=A.U.C. 765) by Suetonius (Tib. vita, 21)? This seems to be unlikely, but cannot be wholly excluded. (b) Did Luke reckon from the death of Augustus (19 August A.D. 14) or from the vote of the Roman Senate acknowledging Tiberius as Augustus' successor (17 September A.D. 14)? (c) Did Luke distinguish the accession year from the regnal years i.e. did he count the period from 19 August or 17 September to a following New Year's day as the accession year so that the first "regnal year" began only on New Year's Day? (d) Or did he count the partial accession year as the first regnal year, with the second beginning on the next New Year's Day? (e) Which calendar would Luke have been using in either of the latter two ways of reckoning Tiberius' regnal years?" (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor/Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 455). As we shall see, John baptized Jesus on or around 27 November 26CE.

LOCATION: The Judean Desert was John's abode. There is otherwise no location for this passage. It is an acknowledgement of the fulfillment of prophecy.

COMMENTARY: The prophet John, better known as John the Baptist, is establish as the long awaited forerunner of the Messiah. At the time he would have been known as Johannes ben Zacharias. Using ancient Near Eastern custom, the prophet Isaiah had prophesied around 700 years prior to his birth that John would be the crier for the King. Ancient kings sent a servant called a crier ahead of him before a journey. The crier prepared the way. When the crier saw obstacles, he cried to the kings servants to come and clear the way or repair the road. Figuratively, this was John mission. Isaiah wrote;

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:" (Isaiah 40:3-4)

John prepared the way by calling the people to repent. He warned them that the Messiah, the King of kings, was coming. John proclaimed that the downtrodden would be lifted, and the proud would be humbled, while offering forgiveness and salvation to all mankind. **Herein is prophecy fulfilled.**

FOOTNOTES:

1- **beginning** – The word "beginning" is translated from the Greek word "ἀρχή" or "archē". It means "that by which anything begins to be", "the origin", "the beginning" or "commencement of something". **"The first words of Mark's work are 'the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ' ('the Son of God' is probably not part of the original text...)." (Mark 1-8, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor/Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 145).** The questions is, when the word 'beginning' is used, what is it referencing? The gospel itself has origins from before the foundation of this world, and therefore Mark could not be referring to the beginning of the gospel. It surely was not a reference to the birth of Jesus, because he was nearly 30 years old at this point. It references the fact, that Jesus was about to begin an earthly ministry that would end with a sacrifice that would extend to every living thing that had existed on the earth, and everything that will ever exist upon it. It will extend beyond this sphere to every creation throughout eternity. It would be infinite and eternal. It would be the best news ever to be broadcast, and the Gospel writers were about to record the life of the greatest man that ever lived. In Him would be our salvation.

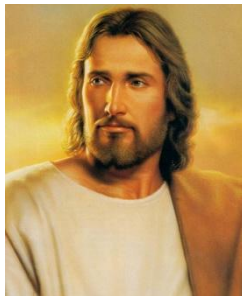



Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, "Mark is about to tell the story of Jesus, to proclaim the good news about him through whom salvation comes, to record salient facts about the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and glorification of him who had life in himself. The 'beginning' of that gospel is that men must repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost (D&C 39:6). This 'beginning' merely puts them on the path leading to eternal life; to gain salvation they must thereafter 'press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hop, and a love of God and of all men,...feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end' (2 Nephi 31:20)." (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, page 114).

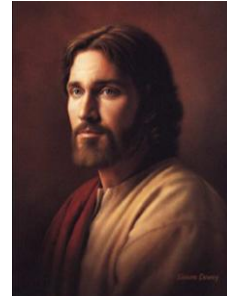
2- **gospel** – The word "gospel" is translated from the Greek word "εὐαγγέλιον" or "euaggelion". It means "a reward for good things", or good tidings". **"The genitive "of the good news" reproduces the Greek *tu euangelion*. The Greek euangelion, which is usually rendered in English as "gospel" (from the Old English godspell = 'good tale'), literally means an announcement of something good."** (Mark 1-8, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor/Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 146). It makes sense that the writers of Jesus' life and mission referred to their work as "the good news" or "the gospel". Without Jesus, we are hopelessly lost. We are fallen, without hope or ability to save ourselves. The best news that can be given to a helpless soul is a Savior.

The term "gospel" might seem antiquated and for us used exclusively for religious discussions, but anciently, it was used for kings and emperors. In courts of earthly rulers, the birth of a king's son was followed by a "gospel" or "an announcement of good news". A king's marriage or victory was always followed by a "gospel". Joel Marcus wrote, **"Similarly, the non-Jewish sources *euangelion* is used of announcement about the birth, coming of age, and emperor, as in the famous Priene inscription concerning Augustus: 'The birth day of the god began for the world the announcements of good news (*euangelion*) that have gone forth because of him.'**" (Mark 1-8, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor/Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 146). It is no surprise that the King of Heaven would have a "gospel" announcing His mission on earth. Oddly enough, the "Good News" of Jesus Christ includes His death, which probably makes better sense when one understands that the "Good News" of His death centers on His resurrection. The "Good News" is that He lives. He was triumphant over death, and therefore offering this same gift to you and I.

3- **Jesus** – The name "Jesus" is a Latin form of the Greek name "Iesous". "Iesous" is a Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua". "Joshua" means "Salvation" or "Jehovah Saves". The name Joshua has roots in the Paleo Hebrew alphabet. We will try to give a brief overview of the origins of the name "Jesus" and it's meaning. We will start with its earliest form.



The name Joshua is Hebrew יֵשׁוּעַ.
The Paleo Hebrew form of the name is;

 (י ש ו)
 י - The nail, the connector, atonement
 ל - Eat, consume, overcome, destroy
 ש - arm, hand, work, deed, flesh, mortality



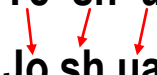
Hence, the Paleo Hebrew for "Joshua" means, reading right to left, "mortality overcome by atonement".
The modern Hebrew for "Joshua" means simply "Salvation" or "Jehovah Saves".

The Hebrew word for Joshua is יֵשׁוּעַ (Hebrew letters: "vav", "shin", "yod")

Hebrew transliteration of יֵשׁוּעַ - Yeshu (Hebrew reads right to left: Yod - "Ye", Shin - "sh", vav - "u")


Ye sh u

We have Latinized the Hebrew Yeshu as Joshua.

Ye sh u

Jo sh ua

The Greek form of the name Joshua is **Ἰησοῦς**
The Greek is transliterated as Iesous

Ye sh u
↓ ↓ ↓
le s ou s

In typical Greek fashion, an "s" was added to the end of the name. Additionally, Greek had no "sh" letter and substituted an "s"
The Latin took the Greek word and gave it Latin letters. The result was the name IESVS.
The Latin had no "J" or "U", and additionally had no lower case letters.

le s ou s
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
IE S V S

In the 7th century CE, the "U" was invented in the Latin alphabet. This again changed the name.

IE S U S

In the 16th century CE, the "J" was invented in the Latin alphabet. The name now changes again.

JE S U S

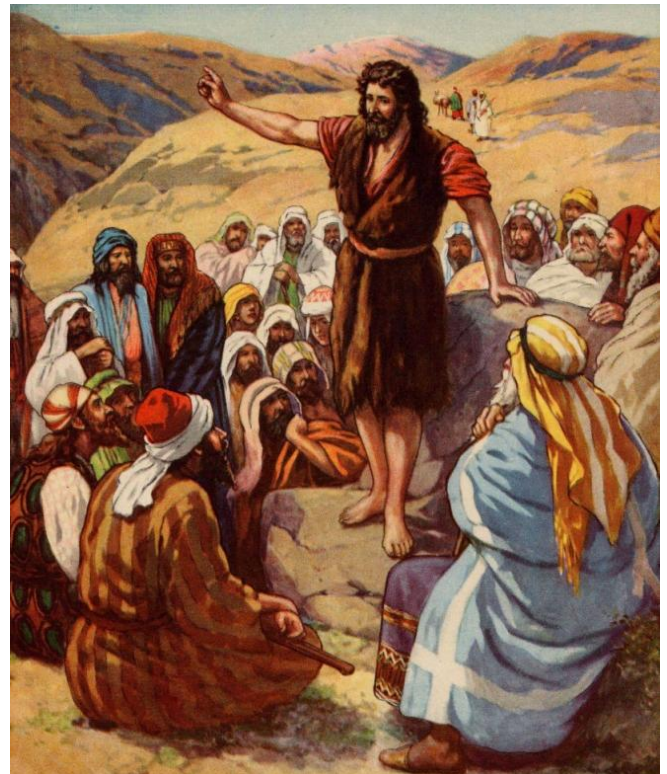
Finally, the Latin invented lower case letters, and we have our modern name;

Jesus

- 4- **Christ** – The word "Christ" is a title. It was translated from the Greek word "Χριστός" or "Christos". It means "anointed" or "anointed one". It comes from the Greek root "χρίω" or "chrīō" which means "to smear" or "to anoint". The word was often abbreviated with a symbol using the first two Greek letters of Jesus' name; "X" and "P". As time progressed, the two letters took on new meaning. Because Christ was associated with healing the first two letters of His Greek name were used in reference to medications and apothecary mixtures. We use the term "RX" today, which has direct reference to Jesus. When the name Jesus is connected with the title Christ it means "the One Anointed to overcome mortality through Atonement."



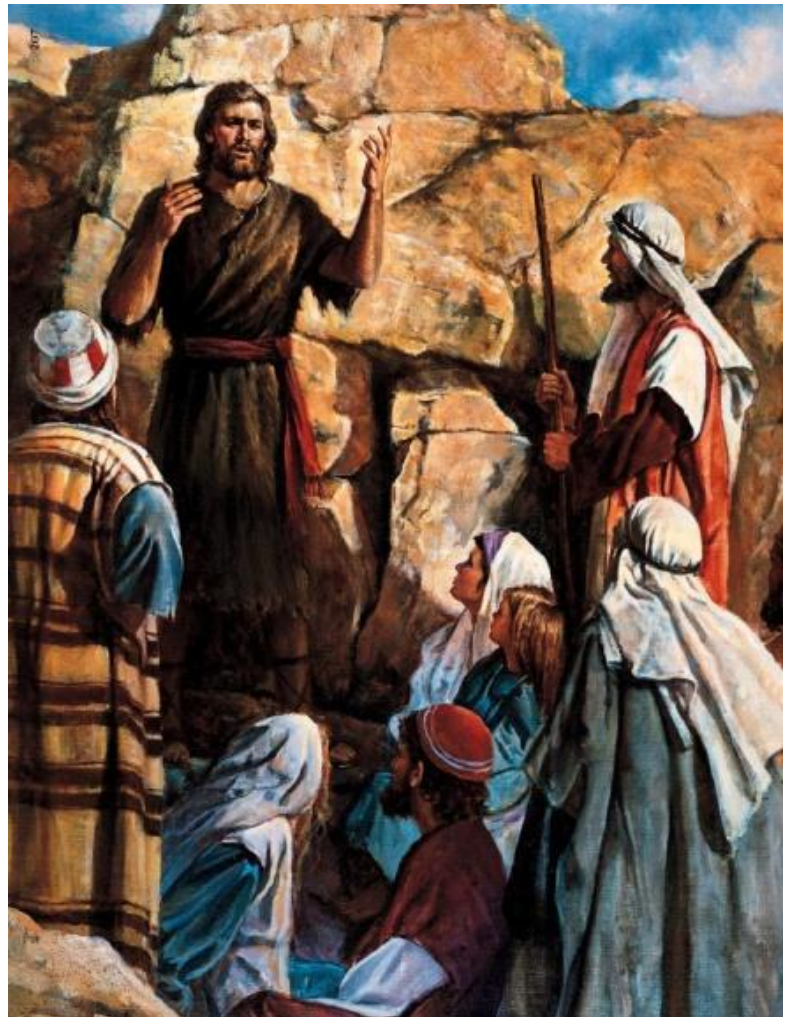
The Hebrew equivalent of the word "Christ" is "משיח" or "mashiyach". The Greek speaking Jews and Christians, at the meridian of time, used the Hebrew word using Greek letters. Unfortunately, the Greek had no "sh" sound or letter. Therefore, they took the Hebrew word and replaced the "sh" with "ss". This resulted in the word "Massiyach", which was further changed as other Hebrew letters did not directly translate. Finally, this resulted in the word we know; "Messiah". The word Messiah is a Hebrew word transliterated with Greek letters. Like Christ, the word "Messiah" means "anointed one". All the Jewish kings were referred to as "Mashiyach". They were anointed of God to their position. The Jews were looking for the Great Messiah. The King of Kings. They were looking for the King of Salvation.



- 5- **Son** – The word "Son" is translated from the Greek word "υἱός" or "huios". It means a son, and is generally used of the offspring of men. In this case, the word is spelt using a capital "S", being the Son of God. It is generally accepted that the term Son of God was added to the text some time after the Gospel writer penned the original script. Regardless of who wrote it, the text is true. Jesus is the literal Son of God the Eternal Father.
- 6- **God** – The word "God" is translated from the Greek word "θεός" or "theos". This Greek word is a general name for deity. It is often used for the only and true God. Here it is used in reference to the mighty "Elohim", the Father of all living.
- 7- **written** – The word "written" is translated from the Greek word "γράφω" or "graphō". It means to write, with reference to the form of the letters. The reference here is that ancient "written" prophecy is being fulfilled. These would be prophecies from the Holy Scriptures. Prophets have written about the "good news" for hundreds of years. " 'Good news' implies newness, an announcement that has not been heard before; but it is also important to Mark to affirm that what happened is Jesus followed the plan of salvation laid out by God in the prophecies of the Scriptures. Therefore he, like the authors of Matthew, John, Romans, and Hebrews, relates the story of Jesus to the Old Testament at the beginning of his work through the common NT citation formula 'as it is written' (kathos gegraptai). The Greek perfect tense ('has been written'), implies a past action with permanent results...' (Mark 1-8, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor/Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 147).

The Torah, or the first five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy), is thought to have been joined together in its present form during the Persian period (538BCE-332BCE). Prior to that, they were separate books (more appropriately scrolls). I would argue that they were joined together prior to the Persian period, since we know that the brass plates obtained by Nephi from Laban contained the first five books of Moses. The other "books", as we refer to them, were added to the scriptural scrolls as a united work of scriptures between the 5th and 1st century BCE. The Gospel writers refer to prophetic Messianic utterances by prophets. They specifically reference a prophet named "Esaia". Esaia is the Greek form of the Hebrew name we know as Isaiah.

Joseph Smith received divine revelation clarifying this passage. His inspired translation reads, "As it is written in the book of the prophet Esaia; and these are the words, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight. For behold, and lo, he shall come, as it is written in the book of the prophets, to take away the sins of the world, and to bring salvation unto the heathen nations, to gather together those who are lost, who are of the sheepfold of Israel;" (Joseph Smith Translation for Luke 3:4-5).



- 8 - **prophets** – The word "prophets" is translated from the Greek word "προφήτης" or "prophētēs". It means an interpreter of hidden things. One who, moved by the Spirit of God, speaks on behalf of God. A prophet is one who receives inspiration or direct revelation from Heaven conferring the mind and will of God to His children. A prophet can predict future events, warn of pending dangers, and direct men on paths of good. The Jews recognized the prophets as the authors of divine scripture. In relation to the "written scriptures", there were major prophets, and minor prophets. Of course, I would find it difficult to categorize any divinely called prophet as minor. Here is the list of Old Testament authors/prophets as they are categorized historically;

Major Prophets

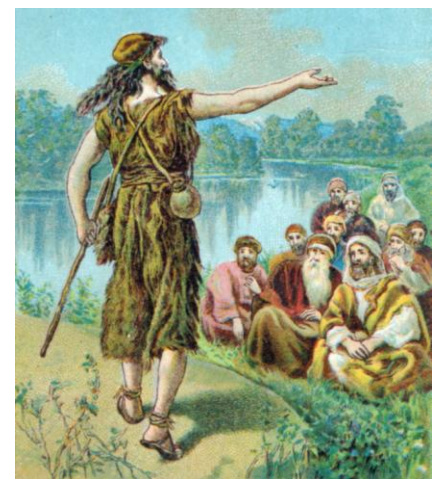
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Baruch
Ezekiel
Daniel

Minor Prophets

Hosea	Nahum
Joel	Habakkuk
Amos	Zephaniah
Obadiah	Haggai
Jonah	Zechariah
Micah	Malachi

- 9 - **behold** – The word "behold" is translated from the Greek word "ἴδου" or "idou". It means "to behold", "see" or "lo". The word is used some 1,298 times in the King James version of the Bible. It has also been suggested that the word behold means "to observe", which changes the meaning significantly. Observing something is more involved than simply seeing it. It feels to me that the word "behold" is a scriptural invitation to listen and act.
- 10 - **send** – The word "send" is translated from the Greek word "ἀποστέλλω" or "apostellō". It means "to order someone to go to an appointed place", "to send away", or "dismiss". God has sent messengers to instruct His children. The messengers have taken various forms, and have come in various ways, but each have brought the message of Heaven.
- 11 - **messenger** – The word "messenger" is translated from the same Greek word as "angel". It is translated from "ἄγγελος" or "aggelos". It means "a messenger", "envoy", "one who is sent from God", or "an angel". Messengers can be prophets. They can be angelic visitors. The commonality is that they are on God's errand. The Lord follows set patterns. He always sends messenger before He acts upon men. Malachi wrote, "**Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.**" (Malachi 3:1).

The messenger referred to in this footnote is John the Baptist. He was on the Lord's errand and had a very specific message and mission. Elder McConkie taught, "**In two dispensations, before both the first and second comings of our Lord, John has come as a messenger before the Lord's face. Malachi's promise that the Lord would send a messenger to prepare the way of his coming, though properly here quoted by Mark, also refers to the Lord's coming in glory...**" (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, page 115). John would again prepare the way of the Lord during the days for the restoration. On the Banks of the Susquehanna River, John the Baptist would restore the Priesthood of Aaron to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Again, John was sent to help prepare the way for the Return of the Savior.



- 12 - **before thy face** – The word "face" is translated from the Greek word "πρόσωπον" or "prosōpon". It means "the face", "countenance" or "look". It is used metaphorically to mean "you". Your face would represent "you", while someone else's face would represent "them". Modern translators feel that the phrase "before thy face" would be better translated as "ahead of you". This make reference to the fact that John was to go before Jesus and prepare His way.
- 13 - **prepare** – The word "prepare" is translated from the Greek word "κατασκευάζω" or "kataskeuazō". It means "to furnish", "equip", "prepare" or "make ready". Isaiah seems to make the "prepare the way" prophecy a reoccurring theme in his writing. Most scholars believe that Isaiah 40:3-4 is the prophecy that is being referred to in this footnote. It reads, "**The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:**" (Isaiah 40:3-4). Less commonly referenced are two other Isaiah prophecies. Isaiah wrote, "**And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out**

of the way of my people." (Isaiah 57:14). He also wrote, "Go through, go through the gates; **prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.**" (Isaiah 62:10). We learn from Isaiah that John would prepare the way by removing stumbling blocks, or the stones in their path, that have hindered the Lord's people. Such stumbling blocks were false doctrine and sin. John taught true doctrine and then called them to repentance. John lifted the standard to heavenly truth. Standards were used to lead armies and people. A true standard leads to victory and safety. John raised the standard of salvation.



Like many prophecies, they often teach on many levels and apply to multiple situations or events. Elder McConkie said that these passages in Isaiah are no different. "Isaiah, however, in his prophesy, is speaking only incidentally of the preparatory work of John and more particularly and extensively of the Second Coming when every valley shall be exalted and the Lord shall be revealed to reign personally on earth." (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, page 116).

- 14- **way** – The word "way" is translated from the Greek word "ὁδός" or "hodos". It means a travelers way, a journey or travelling. Metaphorically it is used to convey a course of conduct; a manner of thinking, feeling, or deciding. The gospel writers are quoting prophecies referencing a "royal crier", or one that goes before the king and prepares the "way" of the king. This was actually a job. The crier was responsible to prepare the road for the kings passage. He would go before, and cry for servants to come when there were hazards. The crier and the servants would repair or clear the road. This is the analogy that is being made; John was called to prepare the figurative way for the Messiah, the King of kings. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches, "**Yea, a voice crying—Prepare ye the way of the Lord, prepare ye the supper of the Lamb, make ready for the Bridegroom.**" (Doctrine & Covenants 65:3). Jesus is the Lamb, and the Bridegroom.
- 15- **thee** – The word "thee" is translated from the Greek word "σοῦ" or "sou". It means thy or thee. This is an antiquated way of saying "you".
- 16- **Esaias** – The name "Esaias" is translated from the word "Ἠσαΐας" or "Ēsaiās". It is the Greek form of the name "Isaiah" or "ישעיהו". It means "Jehovah has saved". The prophet Isaiah is a major prophet in the Old Testament. He is said to have been born in the 8th century and to have died in the 7th century. That is about as accurate as the dating of his life goes. Isaiah was honored by the Savior when He said, "**And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah.**" (3rd Nephi 23:1). Isaiah's prophecies are full of references to the coming of Jesus, and His atonement.
- 17- **voice** – The word "voice" is translated from the Greek word "φωνή" or "phōnē". It means the sound of uttered words, or speech. The Doctrine and Covenants has an interesting passage that seems to have application to "the voice of one crying". It reads, "**Behold, that which you hear is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness—in the wilderness, because you cannot see him—my voice, because my voice is Spirit; my Spirit is truth; truth abideth and hath no end; and if it be in you it shall abound.**" (Doctrine & Covenants 88:66). The voice that John was to speak with was not his own, but rather the voice of the spirit. He was to speak the word's of the Lord and therefore His voice. A voice that speaks truth, and truth is always confirmed by the testifying of the Holy Ghost.

The Hebrew word for "voice" is "קול" or "kol". The Paleo Hebrew breakdown of the word is quite interesting;

קול

ל

- The PaleoHebrew form of the letter is the "Shepherd's Crook" - Represents Mercy, Love, and Compassion

ו

- The PaleoHebrew form of the letter is the "Nail" - Represents the covenant, the connector, the atonement

ק

- The PaleoHebrew form of the letter is the "Flail" - Represents Justice

The voice of the Savior is the reconciling of Mercy and Justice. John spoke by the spirit which is essentially the same voice, in that the Spirit would only testify of such truths. So, why did the Jews not recognize the voice of their God? Why did they not recognize the confirming spirit that must have accompanied John? "**The emergence of John was like the sudden sounding of the voice of God. At this time, the Jews were sadly conscious that the voice of the prophets spoke no more. They said that for four hundred years there had been no prophet. Throughout the long centuries the voice of prophecy had been silent. As they themselves, 'There was no voice, nor any that answered.' But in John prophetic voice spoken again.**" (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, William Barclay, page 37). The Jews were in a state of apostasy, and were unaccustomed to the workings of the Spirit, even when they were presented for their eyes. "**No voice like John's had been heard in Israel since the days of the prophets. Isaiah and Lehi had thundered forth such damning imprecations and spoken with such divine finality. But who for centuries had come forth, as the voice of one crying in the wilderness of wickedness, with such a call for repentance as came from the tongue of John?**" (The Mortal Messiah, Volume 1, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 252).

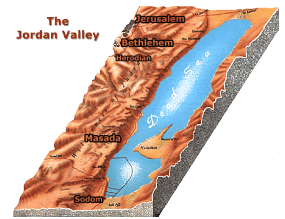
- 18- **one crying** – The word "crying" is translated from the word "βοῶν" or "boōn". It means "to raise of cry of joy pain". It also means "to cry out in a strong or high voice". The Jews of John's time would have understood the phrase "one crying" in a much different connotation than we do. "**In ancient times in the East the roads were bad. There was an eastern proverb which said, 'There are three states of misery - sickness, fasting and travel.' Before a traveller set out upon a journey he was advised 'to pay all debts, provide for dependants, give parting gifts, return all articles under trust, take money and good-temper for the journey; then bid farewell to all.' The ordinary roads were no better than tracks. They were not surfaced at all because the soil of Palestine is hard and will bear the traffic of mules and asses and oxen and carts. A journey**

along such a road was an adventure, and indeed an undertaking to be avoided. There were some few surfaced and artificially made roads. Josephus, for instance, tells us that Solomon laid a causeway of black basalt stone along the roads that lead to Jerusalem to make them easier for the pilgrims, and 'to manifest the grandeur of his riches and government.' All such surfaced and artificially made roads were originally built by the king and for the use of the king. They were called 'the king's highway'. They were kept in repair only as the king needed them for any journey that he might make. Before the king was due to arrive in any area, a message was sent out to the people to get the king's roads in order for the king's journey." (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, William Barclay, page 37).

Wealthy kings had servants that went out before them on a journey and prepared the way. Those that went out to prepare the way were called criers. They were required to have strong voices so as to be able to call for assistance. Those called to prepare the way of the Messiah could be called criers. "The cry sounds like the long-drawn trumpet-blast of a herald. The crier is like the outrider of a king, who takes care that the way by which the king is to go shall be put into good condition. The King is Jehovah; and it is all the more necessary to prepare the way for Him in a becoming manner, that this way leads through the pathless desert." (Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 7, Isaiah, Keil & Delitzsch, page 392).

The crier described in this prophecy is coming out of the desert or wilderness. "We may, or rather apparently we must, imagine the crier as advancing into the desert, and summoning the people to come and make the road through it. But why does the way of Jehovah lie through the desert, and whither does it lead? It was through the desert that He went to redeem Israel out of Egyptian bondage, and to reveal Himself to Israel from Sinai. God, the Redeemer of His people is called harokhebh ba arabhoth. Just as the people looked for Him then, when they were between Egypt and Canaan; so was He to be looked for by His people again." (Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 7, Isaiah, Keil & Delitzsch, page 392). The crier was calling the Lord's servants in the Desert or wilderness, which are symbols for sin and being lost. The crier was to warn of the dangers that lied in the desert and the wilderness. They called the servants and warned them. The prophet Joel said, "O Lord, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field." (Joel 1:19).

- 19 - wilderness – The word "wilderness" is translated from the Greek word "ἐρημος" or "erēmos". It means solitary, lonely, desolate or uninhabited. It can be used of deserts, wilderness, or uncultivated regions. I always picture a wilderness as something with trees and wild animals, but that is not necessarily true. The Judean wilderness was void of much vegetation. Elder McConkie taught, "Wilderness of Judea - A desert area about ten miles wide, lying west of the Dead Sea and extending northward to the west bank of the Jordan near its mouth" (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, Page 113).



There were Jewish sects that read the words of the prophets and determined that the Messiah would come forth from the wilderness. They therefore relocated to the wilderness to prepare for Him. The people of Qumran wrote, "When these become (members of) the community in Israel according to these rules, they shall separate from the habitation of unrighteous people to go into the desert to prepare there the way of HIM; as it is written, 'Make ready in the desert the way of...;make straight in the wickedness a path for our God.' This means the study of the Law which he enacted through Moses, that they may act according to all that has been revealed from age to age and according to what the prophets have made known by his holy Spirit." (Manual of Discipline, The Dead Sea Scrolls, Qumran, 8:12-15).





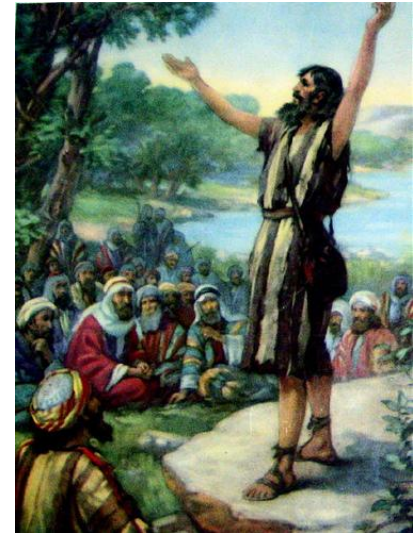
The Judean Wilderness



The term "wilderness" is used symbolically of sin and wickedness. Those that venture into the wilderness are lost spiritually.

20 - prepare ye – The word "prepare" is translated from the Greek word "ἑτοιμάζω" or "hetoimazō". It means to make ready or prepare. Metaphorically, it is drawn from the oriental custom of sending people ahead of kings as they embarked on a long journey. Those sent before the king were responsible to level the roads and make them passable. Similarly, the Jews used the word to represent the preparations that would be necessary in the hearts and minds of men before the Messiah would arrive.

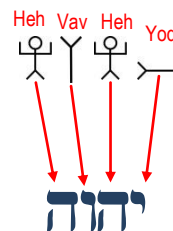
The prophet Lehi prophesied about John. Nephi recorded his father's words, **"And he spake also concerning a prophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord— Yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. And much spake my father concerning this thing."** (1st Nephi 10:7-8). Similarly, latter day leaders of the church received revelation regarding the preparations for the Savior's second coming. **"Hearken, and lo, a voice as of one sent down from on high, who is mighty and powerful, whose going forth is unto the ends of the earth, yea, whose voice is unto men—Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth."** (Doctrine & Covenants 65:1-2).



This business of preparing is an important part of God's plan for our happiness. We were prepared before the foundations of this world for mortality. I like the word "prepared" because it implies our active participation. We were more than taught, we were prepared. This is done so that we would be capable of fulfilling all that the Lord would ask of us. It was done so that we are able to succeed. There is not one soul sent to this Earth that was not adequately prepared. We came here, prepared for mortality, with a greater goal of preparing ourselves for eternal lives. This preparation is done under the tutelage of divinely called teachers and leaders. The Lord's pattern has not changed. The Lord calls His children to gather together that they might be prepared in all things. He said, **"Wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts and be prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked."** (Doctrine and Covenants 29:8).

The Lord prepares His children by first calling and inviting them to change. He told Joseph Smith, **"To lift up your voice as with the sound of a trump, both long and loud, and cry repentance unto a crooked and perverse generation, preparing the way of the Lord for his second coming."** (Doctrine & Covenants 34:6). Once called upon to repent and to follow the Master, the Lord gives us opportunity to further prepare with hands on experience. We know that the Aaronic Priesthood serves that very purpose. **"And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;"** (Doctrine & Covenants 84:26). This pattern continues throughout the Church. We are called to various positions of service, not because we are perfect, but because we aren't. While we humbly serve, we prepare ourselves for greater understanding and development. This growth happens as we lose ourselves in the service of others. The growth happens as we endure trials, without losing sight of the Master. Additionally, the Lord's plan requires that once we have been told to prepare, that we issue the same warning to those around us. We become the servants that go before the king to prepare His way.

21 - the Lord – The word "Lord" is translated from the Greek word "κύριος" or "kyrios". It means he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, or lord. **"If there were any way of being sure that the historical John described his mission in these words of Isaiah, we would have to realize that 'the Lord' in his preaching would have meant Yahweh. His historical preaching of a baptism of repentance would have been a preparation for the 'day of the Lord' in the OT sense. But, as this phrase is now used by the Christian evangelist, 'the Lord' shares the same sort of ambiguity as kyrios."** (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor/Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 461). Yahweh, is the God of the Old Testament. He is better known to us as Jehovah. We know that Jehovah is the pre-mortal Jesus. This is interesting since the Paleo Hebrew for the name Yahwah testifies of this fact.



or the transliteration

YHWH

or

Jehovah

The Paleo Hebrew associates pictorial glyphs to each letter, which have the following meaning;

𐤇 (Heh) means "Behold", 𐤅 (Vav) mean "the Nail", 𐤇 (Heh) means "Behold", 𐤍 (Yod) means "the Hand"

Hence, Jehovah means, Behold the Hands and Behold the Nails

22 - make his paths – The word "make" is translated from the Greek word "ποιέω" or "poieō", which means to make ready or prepare. The word "paths" is translated from the Greek word "τρίβος" or "tribos". It means a worn way or a path. The Lord's path is clearly marked with commandments, covenants, and righteous living. The stones and obstacles in our path are sin and transgression. The criers call them out, and help us clear them from the path. The Book of Mormon teaches, **"But behold, the Spirit hath said this much unto me, saying: Cry unto this people, saying—Repent ye, and prepare the way of the Lord, and walk in his paths, which are straight; for behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth."** (Alma 7:9). A straight path is undeviating. It is precise and symbolizes righteousness. When we are on the Lord's path, we are true to covenants and keep commandments. This path leads to His kingdom. **"For I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness; I perceive that ye are in the path which leads to the kingdom of God; yea, I perceive that ye are making his paths straight."** (Alma 7:19).

23 - **straight** – The word "straight" is translated from the Greek word "εὐθύς" or "euthys". It means straight, level, true, straightway, immediate or forthwith. The word "straight" is used symbolically to represent exactness and perfection. Something that is straight does not deviate. It is also clear, and without danger.

24 - **every valley** – The word "valley" is translated from the Greek word "φάραγξ" or "pharagx". The Greek word means a valley shut off by cliffs and precipices. The term "valley" is used symbolically of those that are humble, poor or lowly. A valley can symbolize the down trodden or out cast.

The Lord has been clear that one of the signs of the last days is that "valleys are to be exalted". This may be quite literal, as the Earth itself prepared to receive her King. **"And behold, there shall be great tempests, and there shall be many mountains laid low, like unto a valley, and there shall be many places which are now called valleys which shall become mountains, whose height is great."** (Helaman 14:23). It could also be figurative, and the two are not mutually exclusive. In other words, they can both be true or they may be true independent of each other. The figurative use might be that the valleys are the poor, humble souls of this world. Those that have been persecuted or neglected. Those will be lifted up and exalted. They will be the Lord's figurative bride. The Lord taught that they will **"...be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens, and cause the mountains to flow down at thy presence, and the valleys to be exalted, the rough places made smooth; that thy glory may fill the earth;"** (Doctrine & Covenants 109:74).

25 - **filled** – Most passages in scripture associated with similar language of a "valley" say that the valleys will be exalted. Luke says that the valleys shall be "filled". They too have similar meaning with regard to this passage. I like the word filled, because the poor, the humble, the neglected and downtrodden are all lacking. They lack food, love, compassion and care. The Lord makes a clear statement that preparing the Lord's path entails filling the valley's.

26 - **every mountain** – The word "mountain" is translated from the Greek word "ὄρος" or "oros". It means a mountain. The term "mountain" has several symbolic uses. Many have to do with righteousness. The Mountain of the Lord symbolizes the Temple of God. Mountains often symbolize sacred place or holy people. Similarly, high places used for the worship of false idols were often built upon mountains. In this case, it symbolizes the great pride and wickedness of man. A mountain can symbolize a great man. If the man is righteous, then he is a righteous mountain. If the man is wicked, then he is a sinful and prideful mountain, puffed up in the vain imaginations of his own heart. The Lord states that the mountains will be brought low. In other words, the prideful will be humbled. Jeremiah taught, **"Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks."** (Jeremiah 16:16). The "servants" clear the King's path by seeking out the proud and humbling them. This is part of preparing the way.

27 - **hill** – The word "hill" is translated from the Greek word "βουνός" or "bounos". It means a hill, eminence or mound. A hill has similar symbolic meaning as a mountain, but to a lesser degree. See footnote #26 in this chapter.

28 - **brought low** – The phrase "brought low" is translated from the Greek word "ταπεινώ" or "tapeinoō". It means to make low or bring low. It is used metaphorically when something is brought into a humble condition, lowered in rank, or abased. Being "brought low" can symbolize being humbled or having pride removed. Humility is a required trait for exaltation. Part of the Lord's work is to establish a humble and teachable people. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches, **"And by thy word many high ones shall be brought low, and by thy word many low ones shall be exalted."** (Doctrine & Covenants 112:8). This sounds painful if you are proud, however, that depends on how willing you are to submit to the Lord's will. More often than not, the proud are not willing to submit. To those that are willing, the psalmist taught, **"The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me."** (Psalms 116:6). Those that fail to hearken to the Lord, are often called by trial and tribulation. **"Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow."** (Psalms 107:39). The consequences to those that don't respond to the Lord's pleads are not desirable. They become the wicked. **"Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place."** (Job 40:12).

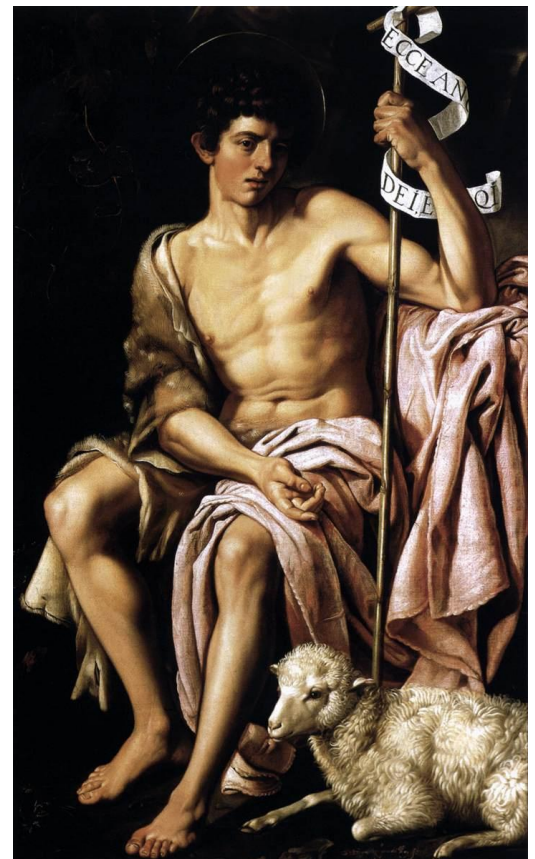
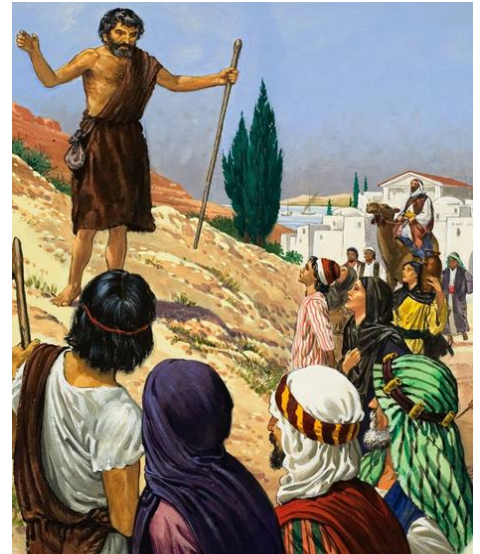
It is interesting that John was sent to cry, as a voice in the wilderness, proclaiming that the mountains would be made low and the valleys filled. The Psalmist said, **"Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I."** (Psalms 142:6). This was the cry of John; a plea to repent. It is a plea to make the path ready for the King.

29 - **crooked** – The word "crooked" is translated from the Greek word "σκολιός" or "skolios". It means crooked or curved. It is the root of our word "scoliosis", which is an abnormal curvature of the spine. It is used metaphorically for something or someone that is "perverse", "wicked", "unfair" or "surlly". The term "crooked" is the opposite of "straight". Symbolically, the term "crooked" means "wicked", "corrupt" and "evil". A crooked path is deceptive and unclear as to where it leads. Crooked paths are generally seen as unsafe, spiritually as well as physically.

The symbolism of "crooked" paths is found throughout scripture. In keeping with the theme of the crier preparing the way for the King, Isaiah wrote, **"I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron."** (Isaiah 45:2). A lamentation speaks of the sad state of an unprepared path. **"He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked."** (Lamentations 9:3).

The word "crooked" is often used to convey the idea of wickedness. Moses taught, **"They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation."** (Deuteronomy 32:5). Speaking of the wicked, the writer of proverbs wrote, **"Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:"** (Proverbs 2:15). The problem with crooked paths is that once we go down them we become lost, and cannot find our way back. **"That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered."** (Ecclesiastes 1:15). Left to our own devices, crooked paths are terminal.

For us to successfully navigate mortality, we must find the straight path of God. **"For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that**



which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round." (Doctrine & Covenants 3:2, see also Alma 7:20). This is our goal, to be on His path. The question is, how do we find the straight path, when we have wandered down the crooked one? The answer is, we need help. The good news, or the gospel, is that help is available to all regardless of our situation. Isaiah taught, **"And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."** (Isaiah 42:16). This is the miracle of the atonement. This is what Jesus did for us. Through Him, and by Him, we shall not be forsaken, but saved, so much as we chose to walk His path, He will find us.



30 - shall be – The word "shall" is translated from the Greek word "ἔσομαι" or "esomai". It is used to mean shall or will. This is an interesting choice of words since it is absolute. And so it is with God. He is perfect, and therefore, when He speaks it shall happen. No maybes. **"What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."** (Doctrine and Covenants 1:38).

31 - rough ways – The word "rough" is translated from the Greek word "τραχύς" or "trachys". It means rough or rocky. A "rough way" symbolizes a life full of mis-steps and errors. It represents a life full of trials and tribulations as consequence of sin. Rough ways and crooked paths carry very similar symbolic meanings. See also footnote #29 in this chapter.

32 - made smooth – The word "smooth" is translated from the Greek word "λεῖος" or "leios". The word means "smooth" or "level". A "smooth" way symbolizes a life full of righteousness and faith. It represents a life absent of the consequences of sin. It would be a life free from the trial and tribulations that are consequent of sin. Notice that God promises to make the crooked (the sinful) straight (forgiven, purified) and the rough (trials, tribulation, consequence of sin) smooth (righteous and faithful).

Speaking of the scriptural reference of rough things being made smooth, one Biblical scholar wrote, **"The command, according to its spiritual interpretation, points to the encouragement of those that are cast down, the humiliation of the self-righteous and the self-secure, the changing of dishonesty into simplicity, and of unapproachable haughtiness into submission (for aqobh, hilly, rugged, compare to Jeremiah 17:9 together with Habbakuk 2:4). In general, the meaning is that Israel is to take care, that the God who is coming to deliver it shall find it in such an inward and outwards state as befits His exaltation and His purpose."** (Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 7, Isaiah, Keil & Delitzsch, page 393). John's mission is consoling the downtrodden and warning the prideful within the same message. There appears to be an allotted time to allow us to prepare ourselves for the day we meet Jesus, or engross ourselves in sinful habits making that same meeting one of great sorrow or great joy. Nephi warned, **"And ye also know that by the power of his almighty word he can cause the earth that it shall pass away; yea, and ye know that by his word he can cause the rough places to be made smooth, and smooth places shall be broken up. O, then, why is it, that ye can be so hard in your hearts?"** (1st Nephi 17:46).

33 - all – The Lord invites "all" to partake. We are all His children. He loves each one of us. There is no preference based on any of the attributes of mortality. There are no disqualifiers, with exception of our choices. He will never choose to discard us, but we often choose to abandon Him. He offers extended arms, but we must choose to embrace. He would have all His children return to Him, but He loves us enough to give us the choice.

34 - flesh – The word "flesh" is translated from the Greek word "σάρξ" or "sarx". It means the body of a human. The word is used metaphorically to denote mere human nature, the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin and opposed to God. **"The revelation is made for the good of Israel, but not secretly or exclusively; for all the human race, called here designedly 'all flesh' (kol basar), will come to see it. Man, because he is flesh, cannot see God without dying (Ex. 33:20); but the future will fill up this gulf of separation."** (Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 7, Isaiah, Keil & Delitzsch, page 393).

35 - see – The word "see" is translated from the Greek word "ὀπτανομαι" or "optanomai". The word means "to look at", "behold", or "to allow one's self to be seen". It can be used metaphorically to convey the idea of knowledge or understanding.

36 - salvation – The word "salvation" is translated from the Greek word "σωτήριος" or "sōtērios". It means "saving" or "bringing salvation". This is an interesting play on words. Luke says that all flesh shall see the "salvation" of God. How can you see salvation? Well, here is the play. The word for salvation in Hebrew is "יְשׁוּעָה" or "yeshuw'ah". It is pronounced "yesh-ū'ä". The name Joshua, which is the Hebrew name for Jesus, in Hebrew is "יְהוֹשֻׁעַ" or "Yēhowshuwa". It is pronounced "yeh-hō-shū'ah". Joshua means Jehovah is salvation and is a form of the word salvation. Let's look at the pronunciations side by side;

Salvation - yesh-ū'ä
 Joshua - yeh-hō-shū'ah

So, Jesus is salvation. And, eventually every eye shall see Him. But, how are we all saved by Him? **"The prophet Brigham Young taught that doctrine when he declared that 'every person who does not sin away the day of grace, and become an angel to the Devil, will be brought forth to inherit a kingdom of glory' (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young [1997], 288). This meaning of saved ennobles the whole human race through the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In this sense of the word, all should answer: "Yes, I have been saved. Glory to God for the gospel and gift and grace of His Son!" "** (General Conference, "Have You been Saved?", Dalin H. Oaks, April 1998). We are all saved and need not wait for the day of His appearance to see Him. We can clearly see His hand in our lives every time we repent and call upon His Holy Namen. President Brigham Young declared, **"It is present salvation and the present influence of the Holy Ghost that we need every day to keep us on saving ground...I want present salvation. ... Life is for us, and it is for us to receive it today, and not wait for the Millennium. Let us take a course to be saved today"** (Discourses of Brigham Young, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 15–16).

37 - for this is he – The gospel writer Matthew is clearly stating that the "he" spoken of by Isaiah is "John the Baptist". The scriptural prophecy may have other applications to the restoration and the second coming, but Matthew is clear that the prophecy is fulfilled in John. **Herein is prophecy fulfilled.**

38 - spoken of – The word "spoken" is translated from the Greek word "ῥέω" or "rheō". It means to pour forth or to utter. This phrase is used to illustrate that the prophecy of this event was "uttered" long ago. Nearly 700 years prior to John's birth, the prophet Isaiah saw him and recorded his revelation.