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## **“A Mystery to the World”: A New Proposal for Isaiah 22:20-25**

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# “A MYSTERY TO THE WORLD”: A NEW PROPOSAL FOR ISAIAH 22:20-25

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Spencer Kraus

**Abstract:** *Isaiah's oracle in Isaiah 22 regarding a man named Eliakim employs significant and unique language regarding a “nail in a sure place.” This language is accompanied by clear connections to the ancient temple, including the bestowal of sacred clothing and authority, offering additional significant context through which to understand this phrase. Additionally, according to early leaders of the Church, this oracle may not be translated correctly into English, which has caused some confusion regarding the true meaning of the oracle's conclusion. As such, I offer a new translation of this oracle based on intertextual clues that resolves some of the apparent issues regarding this text and further highlights the temple themes employed by Isaiah.*

A unique oracle in Isaiah 22 relates that a court official named Eliakim would be given additional power and responsibility from the Lord. Although not unique in historical content, as other political or ecclesiastical figures are referred to throughout Isaiah's corpus of prophecies, this oracle is unique in language employed by the prophet Isaiah. Quoting from the King James Version of the Bible, the Bible most familiar to English-speaking Latter-day Saints, we read the following:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiab: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and

he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord hath spoken it. (Isaiah 22:20–25)<sup>1</sup>

This oracle contains specific imagery relating to the temple in addition to the referent to “a nail in a sure place.” This language regarding a nail is seldom touched upon in the scriptures, but I will argue that it, too, was understood by ancient authors to be related to the temple and appears to have been understood in a temple context by the prophet Joseph Smith and other leaders of the Church.

For instance, in December 1844, an unsigned editorial was published in the *Times and Seasons* simply entitled “Keys.” This editorial offered commentary on this oracle against Shebna and the prophesied rise of Eliakim to power. The editor of the *Times and Seasons* states that this oracle is “[t]he first important passage in the bible” relating to Priesthood keys and contains “some other very curious knowledge unexplained” by the ancient prophet.<sup>2</sup> The apostle John Taylor was the leading editor for the Church newspaper at this time, and so it is likely that he was the principal author of this editorial.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the final three verses of this oracle, John Taylor wrote,

“The nail fastened in a sure place,” remains a mystery to the world, and will, but the wise understand. As to the “*offspring* and *issue* of his father's house” being *appended* to Jesus Christ, the Latter-day Saints believe *that* — but if any man believes that the 25th verse is a true translation and explanation of the “nail,” he is welcome to his opinion; he knows nothing of the key of David, and little about the keys of the kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

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1. All following verses from the Old Testament will be the author's own translations. All translations from the New Testament will come from the New Revised Standard Version.

2. “Keys,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (December 15, 1844): 748, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/8359>.

3. Throughout the remainder of this paper, I will presume Taylor to be the primary author of this editorial.

4. “Keys,” 748. It appears that this editorial may have been written partially in response to Sidney Rigdon, as Taylor further elaborates that “the great *Anti Christ*

The editorial, although authored after Joseph's death, may reflect teachings originating with Joseph Smith's instructions.<sup>5</sup> In a sermon recorded by William Clayton in April 1844, Joseph appears to have referred to the oracle in connection with the priesthood keys held by prophets as well as the temple ordinances then being performed in Nauvoo, including baptisms for the dead: "As a last extremity like a nail in a sure place — he [Joseph] says 'else what shall they do who are bap for the dead &c.'"<sup>6</sup> Due to the sacred nature of the temple ordinances, the statement that the phrase "remains a mystery to the world, and will" may thus be explained.

Given the nature of this editorial, and given the reference to the apparent mistranslation found within this oracle, I would therefore propose an alternative translation that better highlights the nature of the oracle in its temple context:

And it will come to pass in that day, I will call to my servant, to Eliakim<sup>7</sup> son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him in your garment, and I will strengthen him with your sash, and your authority will I give into his hand. And he shall be as a father

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of the last days, who would feign to make the world believe, (the saints know better) that he is 'my servant' *the branch* holding the before mentioned key of David, has gone to Pittsburg to prepare for war." "Keys," 749. Other letters and publications in this issue of the *Times and Seasons* deal explicitly with the continuing conflict between Sidney Rigdon (then organizing a church in Pittsburgh) and the Twelve Apostles.

5. The language of the Eliakim oracle may have affected the Prophet Joseph's previous language and sermons. For example, in "Journal, 1835–1836," p. 93, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/94>, the prophet mentions "the nail in a sure place."

6. "Minutes and Discourses, 6–8 April 1844, as Reported by William Clayton [37]," p. 7 [37], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-and-discourses-6-8-april-1844-as-reported-by-william-clayton/37>. Prior to this comment, Joseph commented on the keys of the priesthood that were delivered to Peter and all other prophets (himself included), perhaps deriving the content from Isaiah 22:22.

7. Or, "as Eliakim." The *lamed* prefix that often is translated as "to" or "for" could also be "as" or "like." This reading of the prefix may be seen in verse 21, where Eliakim is described "a father," *l'āb* (לֵאב), to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M. E. J. Richardson, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1:1–2, 507–511, s.vv. "אב," "ל"; hereafter cited as *HALOT*. Reading this phrase "as Eliakim" allows that Eliakim may be symbolic of all temple petitioners before the Lord. This possible symbolism will be further touched upon below.

to the inhabitants<sup>8</sup> of Jerusalem and to the House of Judah, and I will give the key of the house of David upon his shoulder: and he shall open and none shall shut; he shall shut and none shall open. And I will strike him a nail in a sure place, and he shall be a throne of glory to his father's house. And upon him all the glory of his father's house will be hung — the offspring and the issue, and all the small instruments from the bowls to all the jars.<sup>9</sup> In that day, declares<sup>10</sup> the Lord of Hosts, should the nail that is struck in the sure place be removed, it will be cut down and it will fall, and the prophecy<sup>11</sup> that is upon it will be cut,<sup>12</sup> for the Lord has spoken. (Isaiah 22:20–25)

My translation of verses 20–22 and 24 is similar to previous translations into English; the following discussion will first focus on the temple themes found in these verses before moving on towards an analysis of verses 23 and 25 regarding the “nail in a sure place.” I will conclude by discussing two possible applications of these verses, highlighting the Messianic nature of this oracle as well as the type that Eliakim becomes for modern temple patrons.

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8. The Hebrew word is singular (i.e., “inhabitant”), yet could be understood as a collective.

9. Alternatively, this noun could be understood as “lyres” or “musical instruments,” as will be discussed below.

10. The verb used by Isaiah in this instance, *nē'um* (נָאֵם), is used in the context of a declaration by an oracle. In other words, an authorized representative of the Lord declares the following covenantal curse should the petitioner/Eliakim prove unfaithful. See *HALOT*, 1:657–58, s.v. “נָאֵם.”

11. The noun *mašā'* (מִשָּׂא) is a prophetic burden or prophecy. In this verse, many English translators will render this as a weight placed upon the nail. See *HALOT*, 641–42, s.v. “מִשָּׂא.” Although it is a valid translation, this does not capture the full meaning of the word that appears to have been intended. Ancient sources also understood this to refer to a prophecy, as this noun was used elsewhere in prophetic oracles (see Isaiah 19:1; 22:1; Zechariah 12:1). Rashi, for instance, noted that many interpreted verse 25 to mean “the prophecy prophesied about him will be fulfilled.” Shlomo Yitzchaki (“Rashi”), “Rashi on Isaiah 22:25,” Sefaria (website), translation mine.

12. This verb, *kērat* (כָּרַת), is used to demonstrate the making of covenants in Hebrew. In this context, it could be understood that a prophecy regarding the nail is covenantally made or fulfilled. See *HALOT*, 1:500–501, s.v. “כָּרַת.”

### Temple Themes in the Eliakim Oracle

Temple themes in this oracle begin with the name of Eliakim (אליקים) — “God will raise up,”<sup>13</sup> the son of Hilkiah (חלקיהו),<sup>14</sup> or “the portion/inheritance of the LORD.” Each name draws upon the hoped-for blessings of the temple by being brought up into the Lord’s presence and inheriting all blessings from Him.<sup>15</sup> Eliakim is promised authority as the Lord employs temple imagery in His calling of Eliakim. A robe and a sash offered to Eliakim evoke the image of the priestly robe and sash worn by the Levites.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, like temple priests, Eliakim is promised that Isaiah’s authority will be given “to his hand” — much like Israelite priests had their “hands filled” when they were anointed to their temple service, which is a ritual practice often masked in English translations of the Bible. A phrase that is often translated as “consecrate” in the Old Testament is *mālē’ yad* (מלא יד), which literally means “fill the hand.”<sup>17</sup> Because most English translations render this phrase as the priest being “consecrated” or “ordained,” the implicit connection between this ritual action in these verses and the action promised on Eliakim’s behalf is masked in English. The *Testament of Levi* 8:10 also refers to this practice as Levi is initiated for his priestly role: “The seventh [man/angel] placed the priestly diadem on me and *filled my hands* with incense, in order that I might serve as priest for the Lord God.”<sup>18</sup> Other instances in the Bible that may reflect this practice are seen in Exodus 29:23–24 and Leviticus 8:26–28, in which

13. HALOT, 1:56, s.v. “אליקים.”

14. HALOT, 1:324; s.v. “חלקיהו.”

15. This blessing was prominent in the ancient temple and accounts of heavenly and ritual ascent and can be a hope for modern temple petitioners and disciples of Christ. As Jeffrey M. Bradshaw explains, “In addition to exceptional accounts of heavenly ascent experienced by prophets in mortal life, all disciples of Jesus Christ look forward to an ultimate consummation of their aspirations by coming into the presence of the Father after death, thereafter dwelling in His presence for eternity.” Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Heavenly Ascent and Ritual Ascent,” Book of Moses Essay 31, Pearl of Great Price Central (website), November 27, 2020, <https://pearlofgreatpricecentral.org/heavenly-ascent-and-ritual-ascent/>.

16. See Exodus 28 for a detailed account of the clothing worn by the Israelite temple priests.

17. HALOT, 1:583–84, s.v. “מלא.” See, for example, Exodus 28:41, 29:9, 29, 33, 35 and Leviticus 21:10 in which officiating figures are instructed to “fill the hand” of a new priest.

18. H. C. Kee, trans. “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 791, emphasis added.

an offering is placed on the palm (*caph*, כַּף) of the priest so that they may offer it to the Lord.<sup>19</sup> The connections to this practice are further strengthened when *Leviticus Rabbah* is considered, an early midrash that states that Shebna served as “the anointed priest,” soon thereafter clarified to be referring to the “high priest.”<sup>20</sup> Eliakim, then, would be anointed to this same office.

A part of that authority regards the “key of the house of David,” allowing Eliakim to open and shut, with none able to reverse his decisions.<sup>21</sup> These keys are reminiscent of the sealing keys given to Peter by the Lord Jesus Christ: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). These same keys were given to Nephi, son of Helaman, in the Americas:

Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people ... Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people. (Helaman 10:6–7)<sup>22</sup>

The keys referred to by Isaiah are most explicitly connected to the authority held by the Lord Jesus Christ himself in the Revelation of John, calling Jesus “the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens” (Revelation 3:7).

Early Jewish authorities likewise find references to the Temple in these keys. For instance, Targum Jonathan expands this verse to refer to the keys as “the key of the temple and the government of the house

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19. See *HALOT* 1:491–92, s.v. “כַּף.”

20. See *Leviticus Rabbah* 5:5, translation mine. The Aramaic text for which this translation was based can be found online at [https://www.sefaria.org/Vayikra\\_Rabbah.5](https://www.sefaria.org/Vayikra_Rabbah.5). Also known as *Vayikrah Rabbah*, *Leviticus Rabbah* is a midrash to the Biblical book of Leviticus (*Vayikrah* in Hebrew) and is believed to have been composed in the Land of Israel, likely in the 5th century CE.

21. It is also significant that many aspects in this oracle reflect Isaiah 9:6–7, which promises a Davidic king power, government, and royal investiture, further connecting Eliakim with a divine leadership appointment.

22. Of note is the Lord’s threefold repetition of the word “power.” Threefold repetitions figured prominently in multiple temple texts, and according to some scholars’ note for 1 Kings 17:21, “Three often figures prominently in rituals.” *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006), 509.



of David.”<sup>23</sup> While few details remain extant about Eliakim’s role, whether political or ecclesiastical, in Judah, it is clear that early Jews and Christians in the Old and New Worlds saw in this oracle a reference to keys and authority greater than that held by kings and rulers.<sup>24</sup>

A final reference to the temple appears in Targum Jonathan, which regards verse 24 as alluding to the temple vessels. Jonathan renders the “small instruments from the bowls to all the jars” not as referring to vessels or instruments, but as the temple workers who dealt with and used these vessels: “from the priests clothed in the ephod to the sons of Levi who hold the lyres.”<sup>25</sup> Jonathan’s rendering of “jars” as “lyres” is derived from an alternate translation of the noun *nēbel* (נבל) in order to refer to the musical instruments employed by temple priests.<sup>26</sup> Rashi concurs with Jonathan regarding the temple imagery in this verse, stating that it refers to “the ministration vessels with which the priests perform their ministries in the temple.”<sup>27</sup>

### The “Mystery” of Isaiah’s Nail in a Sure Place

Having demonstrated how Isaiah draws on the imagery of the temple in his oracle, I will now discuss the image Isaiah offers of the nail in a sure place. Specifically, I will demonstrate that this nail was likewise seen as an item connected to the temple in the Old Testament and will offer an explanation for the variances in my rendition of verses 23 and 25 compared to other English translations of Isaiah 22.

Beginning with verse 23, my translation diverges from virtually all English translations with the exclusion of the word “as.” As is evident in the previously cited King James Version, most English translators

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23. *Targum Jonathan*, Isaiah 22:23, translation mine. [https://www.sefaria.org/Targum\\_Jonathan\\_on\\_Isaiah.22.23](https://www.sefaria.org/Targum_Jonathan_on_Isaiah.22.23). Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson also view the key of the house of David as a referent to the temple: “the key ... opens the door to the heavenly temple.” *Understanding Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 202.

24. Additional references to these keys are found in the Doctrine and Covenants, maintaining the same understanding as was held anciently. See D&C 124:93; 132:46.

25. *Targum Jonathan*, Isaiah 22:24, translation mine. [https://www.sefaria.org/Targum\\_Jonathan\\_on\\_Isaiah.22.24](https://www.sefaria.org/Targum_Jonathan_on_Isaiah.22.24).

26. *HALOT*, 1:664, s.v. “נבל.”

27. Rashi on Isaiah 22:24, [https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi\\_on\\_Isaiah.22.24](https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Isaiah.22.24), translation mine.

supply a *caph* or *lamed* that is not found in the Masoretic text.<sup>28</sup> Rather than being struck or fastened *as* a nail in a sure place, Eliakim is simply promised that the Lord will strike *him* a nail in a sure place.

The exclusion of this prefix in the Hebrew is significant, though often overlooked. Indeed, the English appears awkward without any preposition. Despite this fact, I have elected not to include a preposition. This allows for a more literal rendition as well as viewing the nail as something given (or fastened) to Eliakim. On a first glance, it might make little sense that the Lord would fasten/strike a nail for anyone, especially given the seemingly sharp turn taken from the previous language meant to draw early readers' minds to the temple. However, an additional scripture from the Old Testament may support Joseph Smith's and John Taylor's temple theology relating to this nail and "mystery to the world."

During Ezra's reforms following the reconstruction of the temple under Zerubbabel's direction, Ezra states that "the Lord our God ... has given to us a nail in His holy place. Our God has lighted our eyes and given us a little preservation of life in our service" (Ezra 9:8). As has been noted by Jacob M. Myers, Ezra shifts in his prayer-sermon from Ezekiel to an Isaiah influence.<sup>29</sup> Although only two verses are cited by Myers,<sup>30</sup> verse 8 has clear linguistic connections to and reliance upon Isaiah 22. Specifically, the words "nail" and "place" are clearly connected to Isaiah 22:23, and in both cases the Lord is described as "giving" or "striking" this nail for the temple petitioners.<sup>31</sup>

Ezra also refers to the Israelites' "service," a word derived from the root *'abad* (עבד).<sup>32</sup> This word is often understood by commentators to be referring to the Babylonian captivity, but is often also connected with temple service.<sup>33</sup> Understanding Ezra as referring to temple service in

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28. Either the *caph* or *lamed* prefix may be translated "as." Without this prefix, however, such a translation is not merited. See *HALOT* 1:453–54, s.v. "כ." For the *lamed*, see note 7.

29. Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra–Nehemiah: The Anchor Bible Commentary*, vol. 14 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 78.

30. Specifically, Myers cites Isaiah 6:5 and 53:4.

31. The verb "to give" also appears throughout the Eliakim oracle, though not in the immediate context of the nail.

32. *HALOT*, 1:773–74, s.v. "עבד."

33. See, for example, Numbers 3:7–8; 4:23–24, 26. This understanding continued among medieval commentators. For example, Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon (alternatively known as Maimonides) wrote a lengthy commentary on the law. His eighth volume titled *Sefer Ha'Avodah*, literally "Book of Service," contains detailed

this instance may be strengthened by his explicit referral to the Lord's "holy place."<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 22:20 likewise uses this root to refer to Eliakim when the Lord describes him as "my servant," offering another linguistic connection between these two scriptures.<sup>35</sup>

Given the connections between Ezra 9:8 and Isaiah 22, the lack of a prefix before the "nail" makes sense given a temple context — indeed, such actions are explicitly connected to the temple by Ezra. Little else, however, can be explicitly ascertained from these verses regarding the bestowal of a nail in the temple, perhaps due to the sacred nature of such a ritual action that Isaiah and Ezra may have been familiar with.

Finally, the symbol of the nail repeats in verse 25. In my translation, I have rendered the verb *tāmûš* (תמוש) as a conditional: "should be removed";<sup>36</sup> to my knowledge, this is a translation that has not previously been proposed. I have done this for several reasons.

First, when read as a simple future tense verb ("will be removed"), various problems are inserted into the text that may have warranted John Taylor's observation that the verse in question has been translated erroneously. Immediately after offering an oracle regarding Eliakim's rise to power and favor shown by the Lord, he is to fall and be cut off from the Lord. This apparent reversal of blessings has led to some scholars to believe verse 25 is a later addition to the initial oracle following Eliakim's removal from office.<sup>37</sup> Should this verse be original to Isaiah's oracle,

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instructions regarding how temple service was to be performed. As such, many translators of Maimonides's work translate the title of this volume as "The Book of Temple Service."

34. Additionally, Ezra's referral to the Lord "light[ing]" Israel's eyes and offering "preservation of life" may have implicit connections to rites performed in the ancient temple, specifically the anointing of body parts and a shared, communal meal with the Lord.

35. Of course, *ʾabad* does have a wide array of usages that may mean slavery. Such a translation is merited especially regarding the recent return from Babylonian exile that Ezra's audience would have been familiar with. This does not, however, negate the possibility that Ezra could still be drawing on Isaiah's prophecies or using this word in a multi-faceted way — in the following verse, for example, Ezra uses *ʾabad* to refer both to the people's relationship with the Lord as well as their bondage in Persia.

36. The root of the verb is *mûš* (מוש), meaning "to remove." See *HALOT*, 1:561, s.v. "מוש." I have offered the conjugated verb in the body of the text to better represent how it has been translated by myself and others.

37. J. J. M. Roberts states, "The oracle appears to have a later addendum in v. 25 or perhaps vv. 24–25 in which the prophet or his editor revises the earlier positive evaluation of Eliakim. Apparently Eliakim's growing nepotistic abuse of his office

however, then the reference to the nail being removed is best understood not as a foreseen definite, but rather as a conditional statement based entirely upon Eliakim's fulfilment of the office appointed to him.

Second, in support of a conditional reading of the phrase, Isaiah refers to a covenantal curse found elsewhere in the Bible relating to covenantal infidelity. In Amos 3:14, the Lord states:

For in the day I punish the transgressions of Israel,  
I will punish the altars of Bethel.  
And the horns of the altar shall be cut off  
and shall fall to the earth.

Amos was a contemporary of Isaiah, preaching in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. While he and Isaiah may not have had access to one another's writings, it is significant that both prophets use the same two verbs (i.e., "cut off" and "fall") in close connection with one another in a similar context. Amos, moreover, specifically refers to the temple altar in Bethel in his prophecy, showing the Lord's rejection of Israel's temple worship because they had broken their covenants. The reception of curses as well as blessings was a common feature in Old Testament covenants,<sup>38</sup> and so reading Isaiah 22:25 as a conditional curse evoking the same imagery as Amos strengthens the temple themes found throughout Isaiah's oracle.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, the conditional phrase included in my translation is often left entirely up to the context of the passage. Hebrew verbs do not always have a clear conditional tense, and translators must carefully consider the context of a given passage in order to fully parse the author's original intent. While some scholars may yet argue that verse 25 may have been a later addendum to the text, this need not be the case, and contextual evidence can support the verse's position as original to the oracle,

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led to this negative change in appraisal." *First Isaiah: A Commentary*, ed. Peter Machinist (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 292. Robert Alter concurs: "This entire verse is a blatant contradiction of the glowing prophecy concerning Eliakim's displacement of Shebna, and one must conclude that a later editor, aware of a disaster that had befallen Eliakim, added these dire words." *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, vol. 2 (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), 691n25.

38. See Deuteronomy 27:15–16 and Joshua 24:19–20 for some examples of covenantal curses.

39. The verbs translated as "cut off" and "fall" are also found elsewhere in connection to covenantal curses for disobedience, although Amos 3:14 and Isaiah 22:25 are unique in using both in the same curse.

delivered in a conditional context following the reception of blessings offered to Eliakim.

### Conclusion

Many Latter-day Saint commentators have explored the Eliakim oracle and correctly see in this oracle a type for Jesus Christ. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland called this chapter “a moving Messianic tribute,” and sees in the nail a reference to the crucifixion and atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>40</sup> Many of Isaiah’s prophecies, after all, call to mind the atoning work of Jesus Christ, who appears to be envisioned as the High Priest of the Temple.

Jesus Christ was raised up by God and of the inheritance or portion of the Lord. He was given all power and seen as the Great High Priest of the Heavenly Temple by early Christians (see Hebrews 8–10). As the Great High Priest who held the sealing keys and rule over Israel, everyone can be adopted through covenants as His sons and daughters, making Him our “Father.” As the glory of God is the “immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39), Jesus would be the ultimate realization of that glory as the one who made our eternal life possible.

Jesus was also quite literally struck with a nail on the cross for this to happen — and, upon completion of Jesus’s mission, was removed from the cross.<sup>41</sup> Elder Holland and other Latter-day Saint scholars have thus seen verse 25 as referring to the fulfilment of the Atonement and Christ’s body being removed from the cross.<sup>42</sup> It is also significant that

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40. Jeffrey R. Holland, *A Witness for His Names* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2019), 112.

41. The “nail” referred to in the scriptures cited throughout this paper is the Hebrew word *yātēd* (יֵתֵד). This word refers to large nails or tent pegs, which would be close in size and shape to the nails used in crucifixions. *HALOT*, 1:450–51, s.v. “יֵתֵד.”

42. See Holland, *Witness for His Names*, 112–13; Parry, Parry, Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah*, 202–203; “How Did Isaiah Prophecy of the Savior?” *KnoWhy* 647, Book of Mormon Central (website), September 20, 2022, <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowhy/how-did-isaiah-prophecy-of-the-savior>; Donald W. Parry, “Isaiah 22,” in *Old Testament Minute: Isaiah*, ed. Taylor Halverson (Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central, 2022), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/isaiah-22>. Parry’s work is supplemented with his excellent translation of Isaiah found in Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation* (Preliminary Edition) (Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central, 2022), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/book-isaiah-new-translation-preliminary-edition>. Kerry Muhlestein states, “It is difficult to know exactly how to interpret this verse,” and offers a few examples of how this

early Christian texts often depict Jesus performing sacred rites with His disciples.<sup>43</sup>

Some of these commentators note Eliakim may have failed in his expected role. Such a conclusion, though potentially a valid observation, may be reconciled with the Messianic message regarding Jesus Christ given a conditional understanding of this verse. Eliakim's own personal decisions (whether for good or for ill) need not affect the Messianic nature of this verse when it is understood that Isaiah used his own immediate context to prophesy of the future Savior.

Viewing verse 25 as a conditional statement also allows for an interpretation of Eliakim's role to stand as a type for all temple petitioners.<sup>44</sup> Through the ordinances performed in the temple and the covenants made therein, we become more like the Savior Jesus Christ as we are clothed and given sacred promises and authority. Ultimately, the only hindrance to the realization of these promised blessings will be ourselves — our actions will determine if the covenants we make will be broken. Whereas the Lord offers all the nail in a sure place, only we have the power to remove it,<sup>45</sup> and, by extension, ourselves from the Lord's presence.<sup>46</sup> The Lord's promise of mercy is eternal, however, and could

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might be understood in relation to Jesus's Atonement. *Learning to Love Isaiah: A Guide and Commentary* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2021), 190–91. An additional, yet brief, comment regarding Isaiah 22 and its messianic witness can also be found in L. LaMar Adams, "Isaiah: Disciple and Witness of Christ," in *Witness of Jesus Christ: The 1989 Sperry Symposium on the Old Testament*, ed. Richard D. Draper (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 3. See also Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 234–35 and Robert L. Miller, *Isaiah: A Prophet's Prophet*, vol. 1 (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2021), 258–61.

43. See Hugh Nibley, "The Early Christian Prayer Circle," in *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 48–49; Hugh Nibley, "Apocryphal Writings and the Teachings of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Temple and Cosmos* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 315. Nibley quotes Acts of John 94–96.

44. See note 7 for a possible translation of the oracle to support this conclusion.

45. Joseph Smith once taught that a man "cannot be damned through all eternity, [there] is a possibility for his escape" conditional upon repentance. Regarding such an individual, "his own mind damns him." "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff," p. 138, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/6>.

46. It is noteworthy that verse 25 does not refer to the Lord as the one who will remove the nail, unlike verse 23's statement that the Lord will strike the temple petitioner the nail.

be rightfully described as "a nail in a sure place" for all who come to Him and honor the covenants they have entered in His holy temple.

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