



“He Trusted in the Lord God of Israel”

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

Follow Him: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Friday and Saturday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions:

Part 1:

How is 2 Kings like the Book of Mormon? Dr. Joshua Sears explores how Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Mormon are parallel in theme, language, and idea. We also discuss how the Ten Tribes became lost by forgetting they are covenant Israel.

Part 2:

Dr. Sears returns to discuss the righteous King Hezekiah and King Josiah and the impact of the Rabshakeh trying to tear down the faith of King Hezekiah and the remaining Israelites in the Southern Kingdom. We discuss what types of voices we choose to listen to in times of difficulty.

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Part 1

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- 03:48 Hebrew Bible organization
- 09:20 Deuteronomistic history traces both Northern and Southern Kingdom
- 13:42 End of the books of Kings
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- 18:13 Isaiah’s importance
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Part 2

- 00:00 Part II– Dr. Joshua Sears
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- 1:04:59 Trust in Jesus Christ through big and small trials
- 1:09:18 End of Part II—Dr. Joshua Sears

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Biographical Information:



Joshua Sears grew up in Southern California and served in the Chile Osorno Mission. He received a BA in ancient Near Eastern studies from BYU, where he taught at the Missionary Training Center and volunteered as an EMT. He received an MA from The Ohio State University and a PhD in Hebrew Bible at The University of Texas at Austin. His research interests include Israelite prophecy, marriage and families in the ancient world, and the publication history of Latter-day Saint scripture. He has presented at regional and national meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, BYU Education Week, the Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, and the Leonardo Museum Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. His wife, Alice, is from Hong Kong and plays in Bells at Temple Square; they live in Lindon, Utah, with their five children.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:01	Welcome to Follow Him, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their Come Follow Me study. I'm Hank Smith.
John Bytheway:	00:00:09	And I'm John Bytheway.
Hank Smith:	00:00:10	We love to learn.
John Bytheway:	00:00:11	We love to laugh.
Hank Smith:	00:00:13	We want to learn and laugh with you.
John Bytheway:	00:00:15	As together, we follow him.
Hank Smith:	00:00:20	Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of FollowHIM. I am your host, Hank Smith, and I am here with my co-host and I'm going to describe him using a verse from the block of scripture we're going to study today. This is 2 Kings 23:25. And like unto him was there no co-host before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might. Neither after him arose any like him. John Bytheway, that describes you as a co-host. There was no co-host before him, like unto him or after him.
John Bytheway:	00:00:58	I can never live up to your descriptions here, Hank, so I'll just nod and smile.
Hank Smith:	00:01:03	Yeah. That was actually a description of King Josiah, but I thought it fit you perfectly, John. We're going to be in the book of 2 Kings today, and we have a returning guest who is a fan favorite. John, tell everybody who's with us.
John Bytheway:	00:01:20	We're so glad to have Dr. Joshua Sears back with us today. He grew up in Southern California, served his mission in the Chile Osorno mission, received a bachelor's in ancient near Eastern studies from BYU. He taught at the Missionary Training Center and volunteered as an EMT, received a master's degree from Ohio State University and a PhD in Hebrew Bible at the

University of Texas at Austin. His research interests include Israelite prophecy, marriage and families in the ancient world, and the publication history of Latter-day Saint scripture. He has presented at regional and national meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, BYU Education Week, the Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, and the Leonardo Museum Conference on the dead sea scrolls. His wife, Alice, is from Hong Kong and plays in the bells at temple square. They live in Lindon, Utah with their five children. And Dr. Sears, Joshua, we're really glad to have you back. Thanks for coming back again.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:02:19 Yeah, happy to be here.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:20 This is so great. John, I got to tell you, we have FollowHIM hats, and Josh was so great. He wore his to Disneyland. So as he's walking around Disneyland, he was telling people about our podcast, the FollowHIM hat. He sent me a picture.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:02:36 You have a lot of time in line having conversations, yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:02:39 Yeah, "What's that hat? What's that all about?"
- Hank Smith: 00:02:42 Josh, I have to ask you just real quick, this just came to my head. My dad was a professional golfer, so we did a lot of golfing growing up. You are a Bible scholar. How do you do that as a dad? Do you say, "Kids gather around, we're all going to learn some Hebrew." Do you give it to your kids at all? How do you do it?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:02:58 Yeah, mostly, we spend our time doing Star Wars and Marvel and things like that. But we do like to throw in Hebrew Bible trivia. So they've learned a song for the Greek alphabet and the Hebrew alphabet, and I'm trying to gently nudge them in that direction.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:11 That's awesome. Josh, how old are your kids?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:03:14 They are now 13, 11, nine, six, and three.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:22 That is a busy window. I will say this, John. I work with Josh. Our offices are maybe, what, 10 yards apart? And he is one of the most delightful people you'll ever meet. He is kind, he's delightful, and he's brilliant. He is everything you'd hope he'd be when you watch him on our podcast going, "Wow, that guy's brilliant. I hope he's nice." He is nice. He is nice. We are in the latter half of 2 Kings. How do you want to approach this?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:03:48 Well, I thought one thing that would be fun to do since we are at the end of 2 Kings now, it might be fun to start by taking a step back and looking at the Old Testament a whole and figuring out where are we in terms of all the other books here? How is that all organized? How did this all come together there, get a big picture sort of thing? In the Old Testament, we have two strings of books that tell the history of ancient Israel. And I think in order to help us understand how this was put together, it might be helpful to actually compare it to the Book of Mormon, because a lot of us are more familiar with the way the Book of Mormon works than we are with the Old Testament. So if you start with the Book of Mormon, you can say, "Okay, I can see that there," and then it might make a little more sense when you turn to the Old Testament.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:04:27 So the Book of Mormon, we've got a very similar situation where we have two strings of books that tell the history of the Nephites. And they're written by different people, different times, and they've all been put together now. So one of the strings of history we have are the books First Nephi, Second Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni. Those six books are the small plates of Nephi and it tells a history of what happened with the Nephites. Then we have another string of history books written by Mormon, and that's Lehi, which we lost with Martin Harris and the lost manuscript there. But what we still have after that is Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, Third Nephi, Fourth Nephi, and Mormon. Right there. So two different sets of books, written under different circumstances that tell the history of the Nephites.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:05:13 One covers more history than the other, that's okay, but they're both attempting to do this, tell a record of what's going on with the Nephites there. So that's comparable to what we have in the Old Testament. Again, we have two strings of books. Your first set of the history is what we've just been finishing reading, that's Deuteronomy, then Joshua, then Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings. Scholars see that as a unit of books that were written with similar themes by the same people, telling an overarching history of ancient Israel. And then your second string of books is 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and those all go together as well. They're written in the same mode there.

Hank Smith: 00:05:56 That second section is telling the same history?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:05:59 Yeah. Not in the same way, and it's doing it for different reasons. It's written from a different point of view, but it's kind of like an alternate history to the other one you have. So you

shouldn't read Kings and then go straight into Chronicles and think you're reading the same story. Someone actually took it from the top and restarted there, which again is similar in the Book of Mormon. If we still had the book of Lehi, which Martin Harris lost, you'd be starting from Lehi and moving on through the history. But we also have First Nephi, Second Nephi, taking it from the top and going through the history from a different point of view.

- Hank Smith: 00:06:28 Right. I remember finding out that the Book of Lehi was not written by Lehi, but by Mormon, and everything clicked into place for me. I was like, "Oh, okay. I got it."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:06:37 Yeah. And the way these histories work is they tend to be written in stages. It's not one guy sitting down at one point and he does everything beginning to end. For example, with Mormon, Mormon writes Lehi, Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, Third Nephi, Fourth Nephi, Mormon. You have one stage there where he's got the history as he sees it. And then Mormon dies, and then it's up to someone who comes later to keep the story going. So then you get an update by Moroni. He adds some chapters to the end of the little Book of Mormon there where he says, "Yeah, Mormon died. And then this is what happened, and the Nephites fell." Updates the story further, and then he adds his own stuff. The book of Ether, the book of Moroni, and he writes the title page which then gets stuck before everything else. So you have this initial layer written by Mormon, and then a later bunch of additions written by Moroni that update the story and add some stuff.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:07:24 You have a similar thing going on with this history in the Old Testament, going from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings. It seems to be written in layers just like that. And scholars call that collection the Deuteronomistic History, try saying that 10 times fast. But it gets its name from Deuteronomy because people noticed that the language and the themes and the emphasis in the Book of Deuteronomy are woven throughout the books that follow there, of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. They're just full of Deuteronomic language and ideas and themes in there. So we call this the Deuteronomistic History. And again, like I said, it seems to be written in a couple of layers. There's an initial layer, and then there's one or more layers that are added on top of it that update the story further and add some things earlier, just like you get in the Book of Mormon.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:11 Josh, does the Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah have a nice long name like Deuteronomistic?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:08:18 The Chronicler's History, if you want to call it something.

Hank Smith: 00:08:20 The Chronicler's.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:08:22 It's shorter, right. And we don't know who wrote that, and so we just call them The Chronicler. Really fancy.

Hank Smith: 00:08:27 What would you say the difference is between the two?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:08:30 The Deuteronomistic History, one common way of looking at it is that an initial layer is written during the reign of Josiah, which is the guy that we're going to talk about today. And then that there's an update that happens shortly after the Babylonian exile begins where they, like Moroni, goes back and finishes up the story of the fall of the Nephites where they say, "Yeah, Judah actually, it didn't turn into this beautiful golden age like we thought was going to happen under Josiah. Jerusalem is actually destroyed and we've been exiled." And then it kind of updates that. And then it adds some things earlier to foreshadow that a little bit and tie the story together. So one popular way to interpret this is, again, that initial layer during Josiah's time and then an update during the exile, maybe in one or two layers. The Chronicles, by contrast, is written much later, maybe a couple hundred years later, the fifth century, the fourth century. It's after the exile's already over and they've all returned home already.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:09:20 So they're writing from a much later perspective, and so they write things differently based on that different perspective they have. And The Chronicler has different aims than the Deuteronomistic History. So for example, in the Deuteronomistic History, it tracks the stories of both the Northern kingdom, Israel, and the Southern kingdom, Judah, and it bounces back and forth between those as it goes through Samuel and Kings. The Chronicler doesn't care about the Northern kingdom. So he basically takes Samuel and Kings and chops out stuff he's not interested. So he chops out all the Northern kingdom stories, so that's why there's no Elijah, for example, in Chronicles. They just want to focus on the Southern Kingdom of Judah and its ups and downs. There's other ways in which The Chronicles takes the history in Kings and kind of revises it. So here's just one more example.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:10:03 Deuteronomy, and in the books that follow, they teach the principle that as you keep the commandments of the Lord, he'll bless you and prosper you. And if you don't, then he'll hinder your way. So it teaches that in principle, but there's a bunch of stories in the Deuteronomistic History that show contrary

examples. Because like we all know, real life is kind of messy. The bad guys don't always get punished right away and good people sometimes have really rough lives where it doesn't live up to what you might think is the ideal based on that principle. Deuteronomistic History is comfortable showing those messy, real world examples. In Chronicles, by contrast, whoever wrote it apparently was really uncomfortable with these examples that don't show the principle working. So they go through and tweak all the stories so that bad guys always get their comeuppance right away and good guys always get blessed and it modifies the stories so that they better align with the ideal theology.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:10:56 So you see a bunch of little differences like that in Chronicles where they're trying to show those kind of things. Chronicles is also really big on David and Solomon being the ultimate heroes, and so it goes through and takes out anything negative about those two guys. So there's no Bathsheba in Chronicles and there's no Solomon marrying the foreign wives in Chronicles. They can do no wrong. So there's ways like that in which you can see the Chronicles has things they're very sensitive about, and they're trying to tweak the history to show what they want to emphasize. And then it used to be thought that maybe the same person who wrote Chronicles also wrote Ezra and Nehemiah. Today's scholarship has moved away from that, but at least they still say Ezra and Nehemiah are building off of Chronicles and responding to Chronicles and written in the same mindset as Chronicles. So you can see those as an overarching big unit too. Kind of like the small plates of Nephi, again, as the Book of Mormon. An alternate history presenting things from a different point of view.
- Hank Smith: 00:11:47 Got it. Josh, this is really helpful.
- John Bytheway: 00:11:49 Yeah. Those who compiled our Come, Follow Me manual chose to stay with Kings instead of Chronicles. We are getting it where sometimes the good guy goes through troubles and sometimes the bad guy gets away with it for a while.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:12:04 And Chronicles does have amazing things to add. I hope everyone reads it at one point in their life. It does have some stories that are not in Kings. It is meant to be an alternative history. It takes it from the top, starts with Adam and Eve, and then quickly covers the history up to the King Saul, and then slows down again right there. It is meant to take it from the top and give an alternate reading and understanding of Israel's history. And then the irony is whoever brought together our canon of the entire Old Testament then took the

Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's history and stuck them all under the same cover. So now we get both versions of the history all together, just like in the Book of Mormon. You get the small plates history and you get Mormon's history, and they're all together there.

- Hank Smith: 00:12:41 Yeah. I wonder what the Chronicler would say if I said, "Hey, we got them all and you come second." He's like, "Aw."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:12:47 Yeah, and we skip you.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:50 Yeah, because we already covered that. It's like, "Oh I gave you a better version." And then after that, after Ezra, Nehemiah, do we come back together? And we have Esther, then-
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:13:00 The way that everything is organized in our Christian Bibles is that we get a bunch of history books, so we get the Samuel and the Kings and the Chronicles, and then we move on. It's organized by the type of writing, so you'll get a bunch of books that are things like Psalms and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and then you get a bunch of prophet books that are just all organized together. So the organization is definitely not chronological. The way it is though, it's kind of nice. You can read Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and get that historical framework. And then when you get to the prophetic books like Isaiah or Jeremiah, those prophet books take place at different points of the history. But if you have the historical framework in mind and then figure out where this prophet lives, it can help you situate yourself. They're not in chronological order.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:42 So you can take these prophetic books, come back to your history, and say, "Where does this fit in exactly in the history?" Do you want to jump in now, Josh? What do you want to do?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:13:50 So we're at the very end of 2 Kings here, which means we're at the end of the Deuteronomistic History. And I really love these chapters. I'm glad I get to do this today because the two main Kings we're going to talk about are Hezekiah and Josiah. And you should know in the Sears family, our firstborn son, we named him Josiah after this guy here. And my brother, Mark and his wife Kimberly Sears, they named their first child Hezekiah after this guy here. So in the Sears family, these two Kings are really big. I like to tell my son, "Hezekiah is both your cousin and he's your great, great, great grandfather," just to have that kind of joke there.

Hank Smith: 00:14:25 That's fantastic.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:14:26 I'll confess, my first scriptural love is not the Old Testament. It's the Book of Mormon. One reason that I took all these degrees in the Old Testament is because you can't get a degree in the Book of Mormon and I thought this was the closest you can get to that and I was doing Old Testament degrees. And there's so many connections to the Book of Mormon we can find in these stories because the history that we're going to cover right here is exactly where the Book of Mormon opens in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, King of Judah. So it's both going to set the background for Lehi and Nephi and what was going on in Jerusalem when they started. And later in the Book of Mormon, in Second Nephi, that huge Isaiah block from Second Nephi 12 through 24. And that's daunting for a lot of people.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:15:07 And the reason that Isaiah block is daunting is because it's hard to make sense of what is he talking about? But those Isaiah chapters, most of them are a poetic description of the story of Hezekiah that we're getting right here. And if you know the story in the simple way of telling it, the prose text, here from Kings, then you get to the poetic retelling of it in Isaiah and it makes a lot more sense if you know what the background story is. So a few points here, I think I'll draw those connections. I'll go to Second Nephi really quick and be like, "Ooh, see? That's what this is talking about." And then you go, "Oh, that makes a lot more sense now." So I think that's a lot of fun. This can help us understand the Book of Mormon even better, which I'm always a big fan of.

John Bytheway: 00:15:48 Absolutely.

Hank Smith: 00:15:48 Since we're wrapping up, let's just do a quick Israelite history for anyone who's saying, "Oh, I could use a review." So we came out of Egypt, Joshua leads us into the promised land. We have that Book of Judges, which was really fun and kind of crazy. Then Samuel comes along as the prophet and Israel decides they want a king. And we had our three monarchs, Saul, David, and Solomon. And then Josh, what happens after that?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:16:17 So you'd had some tensions between the tribes in the north and tribes in the bottom up to this point, and then everything broke loose when Solomon died. Solomon's son couldn't keep it together, so there's a civil war and they split into two countries. They're all Israelites and they all are obeying the law of Moses and they're all worshiping Jehovah, but they have such political differences that they have separate governments. And for a few hundred years, these two kingdoms coexist. I kind of like to call

them frenemies, if you've heard that term. They're sometimes friends, sometimes enemies. When they have a common enemy to fight, they'll team up, and sometimes they're peaceful with each other. But a lot of times they're in conflict. So it's like a cousin at a family reunion that every time you see him, you know this isn't going to end well.

- John Bytheway: 00:16:58 A little feud.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:16:59 So the Northern kingdom called Israel and the Southern kingdom called Judah. In the Book of Kings here, we've been bouncing back and forth between, "Okay, here's what's going on in the north, now back down to the south. Here's what's going on in north, and now back in the south." So it's always overlapping a little bit. So at the point where we open up here in 2 Kings 17, we're at the point where the Northern kingdom is about to go down. It's about to be destroyed and be no more. The Southern kingdom's going to last for about 100 years more, but by the end of the book, that's going to go down too. So these chapters cover some huge major drama happening and a lot of death and destruction, as both of these kingdoms collapse on each other. And we get the scattering of Israel and all that is right here. So these are really some pivotal moments.
- Hank Smith: 00:17:41 One of the reasons I brought that up, Josh, is because you talked about the Isaiah chapters. And just understanding that the Northern kingdom is brought up in Isaiah, and it's usually called Ephraim.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:17:52 Yeah. Isaiah's, he'll call it Israel, he'll call it Ephraim, like you said, or he'll call it Samaria because that's their capital city.
- Hank Smith: 00:17:57 Right. And you pick that up, and then the other one he'll call Judah or Jerusalem, right?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:18:02 Yep.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:02 If you can pick that up, that will help you understand Isaiah. If you just understand there's a Northern and Southern kingdom and that Isaiah has different names for them both, you'll go, "Oh, I know who he's talking to."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:18:13 Yeah. And Isaiah, he's not an abstract observer of all these events. He's going to be in these stories as a character. Usually we don't think of Isaiah as a character, he's more this vague, important, powerful prophet who wrote the book that's hard. But he's a character here. He lived exactly at the time when the

Northern kingdom is getting destroyed and the Southern kingdom almost gets destroyed and manages to squeak by and make it that other 100 years. But he's witnessing lots of crisis, lots of trauma, and that comes out both in the Book of Isaiah and in these chapters here.

- John Bytheway: 00:18:41 Our listeners may have heard the phrase, the divided kingdom. So that's a good way. After King Solomon, Israel, 10 tribes in the north. Judah, two tribes in the south. And frenemies, I like that. And who is Isaiah? An advisor to Kings of Judah. Is that right? So he's living in the Southern kingdom and advising Kings of Judah, but he's there and knows what's going on.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:03 Yeah. And you can see that in the book of Isaiah, most of his discussions are about the Southern kingdom of Judah. He will occasionally single out the North and talk to them, but he's mostly addressing the people he lives with, Southern kingdom. So when we recognize that he lives in Jerusalem, Isaiah has some close proximity to the kings. There's a Jewish tradition. He actually married the king's daughter. We don't have that in the scripture so take that for what you will, but the Kings talk to him, he goes and talks to them. So he seems to be very tied to the royal court.
- Hank Smith: 00:19:29 It's always a little bit funny to me when they want a king and Samuel says, "This is a bad idea." They end up having three Kings and it is a bad idea all three times. And then instead of going back to the Lord, they're like, "Why don't we do two kings at once? Why don't we have a king in the north and a king in the south? Let's make it..."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:46 Yeah, double trouble.
- Hank Smith: 00:19:48 "How about we make it worse?"
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:49 And on that, Hank, one important thing that's important in understanding these stories is, way back in 2 Samuel 7, God had made this special covenant with David that we call the Davidic Covenant. A lot of what he told him there is going to drive the way it describes these stories. So if we can jump back there just to read a couple verses again, remind ourselves what happened in second Samuel 7. This is where David says, "Hey Lord, I want to build a house for you," meaning a temple, right? And then God gives him a revelation back that plays on this word house with different meanings right there.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:20:23 So God says, "No, you're not going to build me a house. You won't build me a temple. Your son Solomon's going to do that. But here's what I'll do for you, David." And so this is 2 Samuel 7:12. "And when thy days be fulfilled and thou shall sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name," so this is Solomon building the house for God, the temple, "and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he shall be my son."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:20:57 And this is going to be language we'll see elsewhere in the Old Testament where God is like a father figure to the king in Jerusalem, and the king in Jerusalem is a son figure to God. They have a very close working relationship there. "And if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men. But my mercy shall not depart away from him as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee." So what he's saying there is, Saul, he messed up and not only did he lose his throne, but his dynasty lost the throne. There's no dynasty that follows Saul where his son and grandson stay as kings.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:21:28 But he's saying, "Even if Solomon messes up, I'll chastise him personally, but I'm not going to take away the dynasty from his line. They will keep ruling." And then he continues, "Thy house," so now to David, we've got a word plan house here, house meaning your dynasty, "Thy house and thy kingdom should be established forever before thee. Thy throne shall be established forever." So you get this promise here that David's dynasty is going to continue on the throne of Judah forever. And you see this dramatically play out in the history of the two kingdoms.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:21:59 In the north, they've got dynasties galore. Usually, a dynasty lasts two, three generations max, and then someone kills the king and takes over and starts a new dynasty. So it's always in chaos. Tons of different family lines that are ruling the Northern kingdom. In the south by contrast, it's always the Davidic heir. It's a Davidic king. Someone from David's line that's ruling over the Southern kingdom of Judah. And then that's going to become a really important issue at the end of second Kings, so we'll hold that thought and kind of come back to it.
- John Bytheway: 00:22:26 That's interesting. I didn't even know that. So kings always traced back to David in the Southern kingdom?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:22:32 Yeah. In the south, but not in the north.
- John Bytheway: 00:22:35 Interesting.

Hank Smith: 00:22:35 Sometimes I read scripture this way. I read it and I say, "Don't do this. Go back to God. Don't have kings. Go back to the way the Lord wanted to do it." And every time I read it, they keep having kings.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:22:45 Well, I figure my ancestors in heaven, looking down at me being like, "What are you doing? Messing this up again." So what goes around, comes around, Hank.

Hank Smith: 00:22:52 Yeah. Oh yeah. That's definitely true. I'll tell you that. So now second Kings 17 opens up. Are we going to be focusing on the Southern kingdom then?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:23:00 Well, second Kings 17 is the fall of the Northern kingdom. So that's what we're starting with today. So it opens with this last king of Israel, Hoshea. And he comes on, and here's the background of why the Northern king falls. We're at a point in history now where Israel's prospects are always going to be tied up into these big, bad, powerful empires over in Mesopotamia, in the east there. So right now, the big, bad empire is Assyria. The way Assyria does its empire thing is they want to go and conquer smaller kingdoms around them and make them vassal states, which is a fancy way of saying they make a contract, a treaty, they call it a covenant. And the small kingdom has to promise to send them a boatload of money every year, the taxes.

Hank Smith: 00:23:41 Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:23:41 And in return, Assyria promises not to destroy you. "You pay us the money each year. We'll make sure nothing bad happens to you." And Assyria has got a huge military. And so they kind of enforce this. Every year, they're kind of expanding and adding new people, making these vassal things and they get this cash coming from all these places. So that's how Assyria works. And so they have previously conquered the Northern kingdom to the point where they say, "Okay, you've got to agree now, pay a bunch of money and we'll leave you alone." Israel agreed to do this, but when Hoshea comes to the throne, he rebels against the vassal treaty.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:24:14 This is in 17 verse four, the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea. He's plotting against Assyria, even though he had agreed before he's going to do what they say. And the thing with the vassal treaties is they have a clause at the end that says, "If you break the vassal treaty, we will come destroy you." That's the threat hanging over their heads. So Assyria decides to do exactly that. So in verse five, "Then the king of Assyria came

up throughout all the land and went up to Samaria," that's the capital city, "and besieged it three years.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:24:44 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away into Assyria and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." What that's talking about is Assyria would... If you just wipe out every man, woman, and child, that's not the best move for them economically for Assyria. So what they do is they destroy your country, but then they'll scoop up a bunch of the population and resettle them somewhere else in the Assyrian empire where they can plant crops and kind of grow again. But now that they're not in their homeland, the kind of oomph to rebel is kind of taken out of them. They've got the wind taken out of their sails.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:25:19 So they're just going to grow their crops, try to get by, give the Assyrian some money, and everybody's happy, right? So they have this process of exile, of relocating people. And so they shuffle people all around the Assyrian empire. So they get a huge chunk of the Israelites here and resettled them in other places. And I've sometimes heard people say, "Oh, we don't know where the lost 10 tribes went." Well, we do at least initially. It tells us right here, Halah is over by Nineveh, in Assyria. Habor is in Northeastern Syria. And then the cities of the Medes is somewhere in modern Iran over there. So they settle them in various places. And it's from there that eventually they get lost.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:25:57 There's this big myth about the lost 10 tribes, that they left in a group and they're hiding somewhere. Probably the historical reality is that they lose themselves is what ends up happening. They lose their identity. They forget that they're Israelites, they integrate with the local populations, and they just forget the God of Israel, and they kind of just lose their covenant identity. They just diffuse out there. This is the origin story for what we call the lost 10 tribes. These people are out there now kind of scattered and spread among all the nations of the earth eventually.
- John Bytheway: 00:26:26 So I think most of our listeners, they probably have heard the Babylonian captivity, but this is before that. And we generally call it Assyrian captivity, what, 722, 721 B.C?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:26:38 Yeah, this is about 722 or so.

John Bytheway: 00:26:39 So this is when the 10 tribes get carried away. The Babylonian captivity is coming later, which is what Lehi prophesied about before he left.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:26:49 Exactly. So this is when the Northern kingdom's destroyed. The Southern kingdom, pretty soon here, we'll see is almost destroyed, but they do manage to survive another 100 years, and then Babylon will be the big, bad empire then that will destroy the Southern kingdom. Assyrians first, then Babylonians, it's an alphabetical order, if that helps.

John Bytheway: 00:27:05 That does help. That's good.

Hank Smith: 00:27:07 Josh, we learn in the Book of Mormon, and I don't know if it shows up as much in the Bible, you can let us know. If you read Jacob 5, the Lord says, "I'm going to scatter Israel in order to save it." Does that idea come up here, or does it just look like pure punishment for them turning away?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:27:21 Well, I'm really glad you brought that up because the way that we understand the Abrahamic covenant is God assigned this family line, Israel, that in thee and in my seed, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Nephi makes this point, especially in first Nephi 22, "God cannot bless all the nations of the earth unless Israel goes to all the nations of the earth." Especially, this is pre-internet, pre phone, pre everything, missionary work is all face to face contact in close proximity. So here's an important point. Scattering is always the plan. Israel has to move to all the nations of the earth, but there's two ways you can get scattered.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:28:02 It's like as if God is saying, "Hey, Israel, we can do this the easy way, or we can do this the hard way." And the easy way is that you're righteous, you're keeping your covenants, and God moves you peacefully to another part of the world to set up an Israeli colony and then go bless Gentiles in your midst. Our model for this is Lehi's family in the Book of Mormon. So for example, in first Nephi 22, Nephi sets himself kind of in this framework, he describes that they're participating in this process of God moving Israel out to different places. So 1 Nephi 22:3, Nephi says, "The house of Israel sooner or later," so again, this is inevitable, "will be scattered upon all the face of the earth, and also among all nations."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:28:47 Verse four, "And behold, there are many who are already lost from the knowledge of those who were at Jerusalem." Remember the scattering of the Northern tribes is 100 years before Nephi, so this is very close to his day. And he says, "Yeah,

the more part of all the tribes have been led away, and they're scattered to and fro upon the isles of the sea, and whither they are none of us knoweth, save we know that they have been led away." And he sets his own family story in this dynamic. They're part of this process. But for Lehi, he's not scattered because he's wicked and getting punished, he's scattered because he's righteous.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:29:17 And so even though they did have some bumps along the way, because Laman and Lemuel and murmuring and all that, it was generally a nicer process than it was for some of their cousins back in Jerusalem. However, the other way you can get scattered is because you're wicked, you've lost the protection that God normally offers you if you're being righteous, and God lets your enemies conquer you and carry you away forcibly to other places. That's the kind of, "Here's the hard way to do the scattering thing."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:29:42 And the Book of Mormon teaches us about the good way and models that, but the Bible usually focuses on scattering in the bad way as a punishment. So I'm glad you brought out that contrast there because the Book of Mormon does shed some additional light on this and shows us that scattering is inevitable. It's got to happen. It's part of the Lord's purposes, but the choice is up to them whether they're keeping their covenants and working with God, or whether they're going to go kicking and screaming into the other places and do it the bad way.

John Bytheway: 00:30:08 With my classes, I hope I'm saying this right, I like to call it a fortunate scattering because it's the way that God is going to bless all the families of the world, like you said, in the Abrahamic covenant.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:30:17 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:30:18 But that Lehi's seed was scattered to preserve remnant to the seed of Joseph, a different reason for scattering, but either way, it's going to bless the families of the world. This is helpful.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:30:27 And the Book of Mormon, if you read carefully, a lot of people made the case that part of why Lehi's led to the American's in the first place is to set up this little mini Israel and Israeli colony and do missionary work. If you read between the lines in the Book of Mormon, it seems pretty clear that there were people when they arrived. The native American Gentiles. We know archeologically too. We know that there's people living from Canada, Chile by the time Lehi's family gets there.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:30:50 And there's places in the Book of Mormon that, if you read carefully, hints that they're doing this. So for example, 2 Nephi 6-10 has Jacob's speech that he gives to the Nephites in the city of Nephi. A lot of the dynamic of the Isaiah quotes that he uses and the discussion he has is on the relationship between Israelites and Gentiles. And the blessings that Gentiles can receive as they're adopted into the house of Israel gathered into Israel. If you think about it, the speech makes no sense if everyone in the audience is an Israelite.

John Bytheway: 00:31:18 Good point, yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:31:18 Maybe thousands of years in the future, this is a theory maybe, but it makes a lot of sense if you assume he has got a mixed audience. And part of what he's doing is saying, "Hey, you Gentiles that we've met here, come join us. Get the blessings of the covenant that you can have by being numbered with the house of Israel, which is us. You'll help us out, we'll help you out, and this'll be a great thing." So the Nephites are kind of fulfilling their Abrahamic role as they do that there.

Hank Smith: 00:31:41 Excellent. Josh, I also remember as a kid reading the article of faith, number 10, and it said, "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and the restoration of the 10 tribes." And I remember thinking, "I thought there was 12." And I didn't realize that the 10 were the Northern kingdom of Israel, and the two were kind of set apart from each other.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:32:01 The way that the Northern kingdom responds to their scattering and the way the Southern kingdom responds to their scattering ends up being a little bit different. Like we said, the Northern kingdom, they lose themselves, they lose their identity, they get lost, and just kind of adopt local cultures and customs and languages. And after a few generations, they appear to forget they're even Israelites. In contrast, at least a lot of the people, the Jews, the people of the Southern kingdom, when they get exiled to Babylon, they hang on to that identity. They say, "We are of Israel. We keep the law of Moses. We worship Jehovah."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:32:31 And so when they go back to Jerusalem and rebuild, they've managed to hang onto that through their exile experience. And even down through the centuries, the descendants of that Southern kingdom managed to hang onto that. So that's why in the scriptures, we often categorize those 10 tribes as one situation where, we've got to remind these guys that they're even part of Israel. Whereas the situation of the descendants of the Southern kingdom's a little bit different, because you don't have to remind them they're Israel. They know that. You might

have to teach them other things, but they have that identity, at least. So it's a little bit of a different situation than these 10 tribes, where you've got to take it from the top.

- Hank Smith: 00:33:04 Excellent. I feel like we got a great background here.
- John Bytheway: 00:33:06 The Jews never seem to have lost their identity as part of the house of Israel where everybody else is lost like you said, not necessarily geographically, but they don't know who they are. And we get our patriarchal blessings, and we discover we are part of the house of Israel.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:33:22 And again, it's not inevitable that they lose their identity, but eventually, a lot of them do. Like the Nephites hang on to that identity for 1,000 years, but then at the end of the Book of Mormon, they go all wicked. I'm guessing it's not very long before these Lamanites are no longer saying, "Oh, we're children of the covenant and part of the house of Israel." They just lose that, they forget. And eventually that's what happens to all of these, but the scattering, again, has to happen because the only way for God to gather all nations unto Israel is, "You have to scatter in order to gather." God's playing a very long game here.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:51 Ooh, I like that. Josh, let me ask you something. Even the Nephites themselves, they seem to lose it a little bit and Jesus has to remind them because you have Nephi talking about the scattering and the gathering. You have Jacob talking about the scattering and the gathering. And then it really doesn't come up again until third Nephi, where Jesus kind of has to remind them, "Oh, yeah, you're scattered Israel." Do you see the Book of Mormon that way?"
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:34:14 People notice that in first and second Nephi, beginning of the Book of Mormon, Nephi is big on Isaiah and Jews and Gentiles and scattering and gathering. The middle part of the Book of Mormon hardly ever mentions any of that. And then at the end of the Book of Mormon, that last third with Jesus yeah, there's a big reemphasis on those ideas there. And part of that is honestly too, who their audience is. Nephi knows that he's writing to people in the last days, and Jesus knows that he's giving this to the Nephites to write down for people in the last days. So apparently, they felt, "This is something we in the last days, especially, need to understand." That's where you get that focus.

John Bytheway: 00:34:46 And I love that. Is it third Nephi 21? was, "I'm going to give you a sign that you will know that the gathering has commenced," and the sign is the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:34:56 Yeah. So we're living it. That's important for us to know. This is it.

Hank Smith: 00:34:59 Yeah. One thing that I repeat to my students, why is Isaiah so interested in the scattering and gathering? Why is Nephi so interested in the scattering? Why is Jacob? Why is Lehi? Because they're living it. They're right in the middle of it. To them, it's the scattering they're a part of. They're excited for that future gathering. For us, we need to know about the scattering so we can be excited to be part of the gathering.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:35:21 Exactly. You remember how devastated Nephi is when he sees that the Nephite civilization is going to collapse and his descendants are all going to go into apostasy. He says, "I considered mine affliction that were great above all." He's just crushed that they can't hang onto that identity all the way, but he's got a lot of hope and he tells his brothers about this. Again, first Nephi 22, "In the last days, these Gentiles are going to bring this record, and they're going to gather our descendants back to the covenant and they'll be restored." And he was so excited about that.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:35:51 And I think that's what helped him get through all his grief out the bad stuff that was going to happen in the middle. Knowing that these Gentiles in the last days were going to bring the Book of Mormon back to his descendants. That gave him such hope. When I hear President Nelson calling for more missionaries and how seriously we've got to take missionary work and gather Israel, all the hopes and dreams of these prophets for thousands of years, they're pinned on us. They were counting on us to go save their children. So it's such an amazing responsibility that we have.

Hank Smith: 00:36:17 I hope everybody in the church has heard President Nelson talk about this. Let me just throw out a quick quote from him. He says, "You can be part of something big, something grand, something majestic. You are sent to earth, at this precise time, the most crucial time in the history of the world, to help gather Israel. There is nothing happening on this earth right now that is more important than that. This is the mission for which you are sent to earth." He's excited.

John Bytheway: 00:36:45 Yeah, it was so great. First talk, I think the April 2022 general conference was that call to prepare to serve a mission.

President Ballard got up and kind of repeated the same thing. It was great to hear that emphasis on gathering again.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:37:00 At least one major stage of this second Kings 17, you see those lost tribes hid off, and this isn't necessarily the first time he's moved them around, but it's definitely a big moment. And so it comes back to this. All right. If we want to move on now, the rest of second Kings 17, so about verse seven to the end of the chapter really, it's about what happens to the Israelites that are left in the Northern kingdom because not all of them were exiled. And what it goes through is it first explains why it is that the Northern kingdom fell.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:37:28 So from verse 7 to about 23, it's talking about all their sins and the things they did wrong and that this is what led them to get destroyed. And then verse 24 through 41, get into what happens to those people who remain. And the story it tells here is that the Assyrians, since they're shuffling people around the empire, they've brought in a whole bunch of foreigners from other places and that they settle them in the land here, and they intermarry with the Israelites that are left. And then it goes on to describe that they don't just mix cultures, that they mix religions. That they still honor the Lord, Jehovah,
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:38:03 but they're also worshiping the gods of other lands, and they're perverting the law of Moses and doing a twisted version of it, and it repeats. Until this day, they still do this all wrong. Until this day, they're still carrying on all these sins. And these people have really messed everything up. And to put this in to some historical context here, we've got to keep in mind that the Deuteronomistic history of which this is a part is written in the southern kingdom in Jerusalem.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:38:24 And here they're describing the people that are in the northern kingdom. So, first observation is, we've got to recognize that for a long time, people in the south have not liked the people in the north. They all worship the same God and they live a law of Moses, but they understand it differently. And they're always accusing each other of doing it wrong. The Jews have their temple in Jerusalem. The people in the north have a different temple, Mount Gerizim, and up there, and they have different ideas about all sorts of issues here. And look at Verse 29. There's a term here that it introduces for the first time. Do you guys see what that is?
- Hank Smith: 00:38:56 Samaritans.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:38:58 Samaritans. Yeah. Samaritans, meaning the descendants of the people whose country used to have the capital Samaria, the northern kingdom right here. And we're more familiar with Samaritans from the New Testament. You've got the Jews and Samaritans and we know they don't like each other. That's why Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. And right there, that's a scandalous title because a Samaritan who's good, what?

Hank Smith: 00:39:20 The good enemy. Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:39:21 And the Jews in the New Testament are the descendants of these people from the southern kingdom. And the Samaritans are the descendants of these people from the northern kingdom. So, we've got to understand in the New Testament, they don't like each other, but that goes back centuries, clear to here to our frenemy status in the Old Testament, and these accusations they're making about each other. So, you can see later that in the New Testament, when they say, "Oh, the Samaritans are unclean. The Samaritans are dirty. The Samaritans do things wrong." That's just echoes of what you have right here in 2 Kings 17. They're already saying those things about the northerners right here.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:39:53 Except this time, it's like the perspective of the scriptural author is saying that, because he's a Jew writing from the south. In the Come, Follow Me manual, I'm assuming readers have seen that every few chapters it's got this little insert called thoughts to keep in mind that give some background. It's easy to skip those because they're in between lessons, but I hope that you're reading those because they're all excellent. And one of them that appears around here is called Thoughts to Keep In Mind, the Historical Books of the Old Testament. It talks about how we've got to watch out for the perspective of the authors of some of these stories. Because these stories are not always the pure perspective of God watching everything.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:40:27 It's from the perspective of people in a context. So, here's what it says in the Come, Follow Me manual. This for individuals and families edition, page 94. It says, "These stories are told from certain points of view, or just as it's impossible to look at them from more than one angle at a time, it's inevitable that a historical account will reflect the perspective of the person or group of people writing it. This perspective includes the writer's national or ethnic ties, and their cultural norms and beliefs. They made certain assumptions that others might not have made, and they came to conclusions based on those details and assumptions."

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:41:03 When we read a description like in 2 Kings 17 about how nasty and bad the northerners were, I'm sure there's some truth to that. I'm not saying it's all made up, but we do have to understand that this is written from the southern point of view, and these guys really don't like each other. So, I think there might also be some bias coming through here, where they're making accusations about these Samaritans in the north that may not be entirely fair. But it's coming from the like, Come, Follow Me says, from the national and ethnic ties of the writers. This is how they see it at the time.
- Hank Smith: 00:41:30 Yeah. I think what you've just done for us also helps us make sense of some of the interactions Jesus has with Samaritans, such as the woman at the well, she's a Samaritan. She said, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain," meaning Gerizim, "But you say in Jerusalem is where men ought to worship." Now you read that and you go, "Ooh, I know what she's talking about. She's a Samaritan. She has her history in that area."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:41:53 And these divides, again, they go back centuries clear into the Old Testament. You see that divide very sharply right here. And they still haven't gotten along by the New Testament, 600 years later.
- John Bytheway: 00:42:03 Does Nephi carry some of these biases, do you think, for the north? Is there any hint of that he's like, "Nah, those northerners. They don't know what they're doing."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:42:11 I don't think he really talks about them all that much. I think he sees some kinship with the north, actually, because, well, here's one thing. Lehi is a descendant of Manasseh, and his tribe was from up north. What happens is when the northern kingdom is destroyed, you get a whole bunch of refugees from down there swarm down to the southern kingdom and live there. So, it's no longer a 10 tribes, 2 tribes sort of a thing. There's people from every tribe living in the south, now. So, a Jew at this point is a citizen of Judah, not from the tribe of Judah. It's got everybody. So, these people are family, for one. And the other thing is, Nephi, he talks a lot about remnants, these small groups of Israelites, branches of the tree. And he talks about remnants of Israel that are scattered all around the world.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:42:52 And he sees himself, his family is one of these remnants. So, he sees a lot in common between what he's doing in the Americas, and these remnant groups that are in other places. So, he feels a lot of kinship with them. Whereas the Jews that stay back at home base in Jerusalem, he sees them as doing their own thing. Nephi actually feels a lot of connection with the other groups

that also had to leave home base and are waiting restoration there.

- John Bytheway: 00:43:13 Really helpful.
- Hank Smith: 00:43:14 If someone can see, Josh, this might be the first time for them that they see the Book of Mormon fits perfectly, like a puzzle piece, right into this part of the Bible.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:43:24 Chapter 18 then moves on, we're back in the south now. The northern kingdom's done, so we're not going to talk about them again. The rest of 2 Kings is just the southern kingdom. And this is where we get the King Hezekiah, who it describes as one of the most righteous kings that we have, again. So, shout out to my nephew who's carrying on that name of Hezekiah.
- Hank Smith: 00:43:40 Did the northern kingdom ever have any good kings?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:43:43 Yeah. As far as the righteousness of the kings, it's a mixed bag. You do have some super righteous kings in the north, but there's a caveat. Kings is written by the perspective of the south. And what the first king of the north, Jeroboam, first did, was since he didn't have access to the temple in Jerusalem, he built these worship sites at Dan and Bethel, which is the top of the north and the bottom of the north. And so, the Israelis are coming there and they're worshipping Jehovah, but not at the place that from the southern perspective where you should be worshipping, which is only at the Jerusalem temple. So, Kings, what it does is every single northern king, it evaluates them based on one criteria. Are you going to worship at the south like you should, or are you going to worship out those Dan and Bethel sites like you shouldn't? And you have some kings that are super zealous for Jehovah and they'll get rid of idol worship.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:44:31 And they're just big all time Jehovah fans, but they're always, in the end, evaluated negatively because they didn't destroy those shrines at Dan and Bethel. Now, from the perspective of the people in the north, you don't need to. It's only the southerners who claim that only you can only worship at their place. So, that's one of these divides. So you do have some really good kings, but they ultimately always fail the test because of that difference there. And then you have kings in the south, you have righteous kings and wicked kings, but the righteous kings can actually be all the way good, because of course, they're worshipping at Jerusalem, which is what you should do. But so, again, the people in the north would've evaluated themselves differently, but because we're reading the southern take on this, the northern kings ultimately always fail.

Hank Smith: 00:45:10 We don't have any record of the north from the north.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:45:13 Yeah, that would be interesting.

Hank Smith: 00:45:15 Okay. Because they're like, "We're actually pretty good guys up here."

John Bytheway: 00:45:17 Is there scripturally something that says the temple has to be in one place?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:45:24 It's a matter of interpretation. So, remember how Deuteronomy is the founding book for the Deuteronomistic history? Because the language of Deuteronomy, the themes of Deuteronomy, and the specific laws of Deuteronomy, they're the ones that are assumed in the rest of the Deuteronomistic history. And Deuteronomy, unlike Exodus, or Leviticus, or Numbers, is really big on this idea of what we, the fancy term is centralization of worship, and it's the idea you should only worship God in one place. That's the only place for sacrifice. That's the only place for festivals, one place. And this makes Deuteronomy different than some of the laws assumed earlier, in other iterations of the law of Moses presented. Like in Exodus, Passover you have in your house. It's the dad and mom and kids and they're eating together, and the kid's supposed to go, "Why is this night different from all nights? And the dad responds, with this family setting.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:46:10 Deuteronomy, that's a big no-no. You come and worship Passover at the one spot that's been picked for worship. So, Deuteronomy never says where that spot is. It's really coy about that. It just says the one spot that God's going to choose. But of course, everyone is going to assume later that that spot is the Jerusalem temple. So, people from the south that are looking at Deuteronomy as the scriptural basis for this, and even though it never says Jerusalem in Deuteronomy, they're assuming that Jerusalem is that spot, and therefore anywhere else is bad. That's why the shrines at Dan and Bethel are big no-nos, because of how they're reading Deuteronomy there.

John Bytheway: 00:46:45 Thank you. That's helpful.

Hank Smith: 00:46:46 Okay. So, what happens to the south?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:46:49 Okay. So we get Hezekiah here. Two things for background for Hezekiah. One is the religious stuff he does, and the other we're going to get into the politics of what happens here. So, Chapter 18 starts off by saying that Hezekiah, he's the best king ever. So,

look at Verse 3. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David, his father, did." And this is very standard Deuteronomistic history language, comparing the king back to David. And David's always held up as the model. Not because he was great in everything he did, but because he never worshiped idols. He only worshiped Jehovah, and that's the standard we're comparing. So, Hezekiah is not an idol worshiper. That's what we're saying. In Verse 4, "He removed the high places." So, that's these worship shrines that are separate from the temple.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:47:31 "And he brake the images," the idols, "Cut down the groves." That's these poles for the goddess Asherah. "And he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made." Our assumption here is that, it says the Israelites burned incense to it. So, apparently they had kept that bronze serpent that Moses made and they were worshiping it as an idol. So, to stop that, he broke it up. We call this Hezekiah's reform, where he arrives in a time of apostasy, where people are doing bad stuff, and he's going through and purging the bad things out of there. And again, the stuff he's doing, it has the effect of you're only going to worship here in Jerusalem. And he's going to all these other places and getting rid of that stuff. So, he does this reform, and then Verses 5, and 6, and 7, talk about his character here. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:48:17 And I wanted to pause and highlight that line, because trust is going to be a theme of this chapter. So, we're going to come back to the issue of trust, but that's key that that's introducing him as someone who trusts in Jehovah. "So, that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, and neither any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments. And the Lord was with him and he prospered whithersoever he went forth." So, we get this introduction. So, religiously, the authors of the book see him as getting rid of the bad worship practices that are everywhere, to other gods and the idols. And he's centralizing worship at the temple and Jerusalem, and he's trusting in the Lord and keeping all his commandments. So, wonderful, righteous king here.

Hank Smith: 00:48:59 Is the writer going to say the same thing about Josiah?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:49:02 Yeah. Josiah had also said that none like him before and none like him after were the same. So, you get...

Hank Smith: 00:49:06 You're like, "Hey. You're my favorite king. No, you are my favorite king."

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:49:12 Now, in the second half of Verse 7, we get into the political situation. It says he rebelled against the king of Assyria and served him not. For that, we got to back up a little bit into what was set up in previous chapters before 2 Kings 17. Hezekiah's father was a bad king named Ahaz, that we've covered in previous weeks. And we actually know more about Ahaz from the book of Isaiah, than we do here from Kings. Because Isaiah adds in Chapter 7, which is quoted in 2 Nephi 17, a whole story about Ahaz and what he did that was bad. So, the quick recap of that is this. In the days of Ahaz, again, Assyrians are conquering all these kingdoms and making them vassal states, so they have to send all the money. And as the Assyrians move further and further west the small kingdoms along the Mediterranean, there are getting really jittery.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:49:59 Oh, no, it's just a matter of time before the Assyrians come and get all of us. Bunch of the kings want to get together and form an anti-Assyrian coalition to be a team and fight these Assyrians back. They think we got to stand together, or we're all going to fall separately. But there's one of these little kingdoms that decides they do not want to join the coalition, and that's Ahaz Judah. He decides that fighting the Assyrians is suicide. So, he's like, "Thanks, but no thanks. You guys have fun fighting them." From the other king's perspective, this makes Ahaz look pretty petty, because if they win, good for him, and if they lose, good for him. It's a win-win for Ahaz to stay out of this. But the other kings are really mad about that, so they decide to invade Judah, kill Ahaz, and put a new guy on the throne that will work with them.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:50:38 We call this the Syro-Ephraimite War. This is about 735 BC. Isaiah Chapter 7, again quoted in 2 Nephi 17 talks about this conflict, where you've got the northern Israelites and the country Assyria next to them, and they're together invading the southern kingdom, again, to put on new king on the throne. This is bad for Judah now, because they've got these two invaders. God sends Isaiah to Ahaz. This is again Isaiah 7, not in Kings. And tells him, "Don't worry. Jehovah's going to protect Judah. You're not going to be killed. Things are going to work out fine. Just trust him and don't do anything stupid." That's basically Isaiah's message. The short version is Ahaz, being bad and not liking Isaiah, decides, "Oh, I cannot just stomach it sitting here and trusting in God to save me," so he decides to take matters into his own hands, which is what Isaiah said not to do.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:26 And Ahaz sends messengers to Tiglath- Pileser III, who's this Syrian king and says, "Hey, Tiglath, my buddy, how about this? I got a proposition for you. These two kings, my neighbors to the

north are invading me. If you will speed up your timetable and come take them out right now, I will voluntarily make Judah a vassal to you, and you don't even have to conquer us." That's the bargain he makes. It's a deal with the devil.

Hank Smith: 00:51:51

Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:52

So, then from the Assyrian's perspective, this is a win-win because they were going to go conquer them later anyway. He obliges. The Assyrians come, they destroy Syria, Damascus, and they conquer the northern kingdom, and that's the beginning of the downfall of the north. So, Ahaz really stabs his northern brothers in the back. I mean, he was getting invaded too. So, what goes around, comes around, but because of that, Ahaz made Judah a vassal to these Assyrians voluntarily, and now they've got to pay a boatload of money each year.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:52:17

So, when Hezekiah comes to the throne, he inherits this vassal status that his dad had put into place. When it says here in 2 Kings 18:7 that he rebelled against the king of Assyria and served him not, that's saying he broke the vassal treaty. He stopped sending the money and he broke the terms of the contract. Now, the historical context for that might be this, that at this point in Hezekiah's reign, happens to be the same year that you have a king switching to a new king over in Assyria. So, the old powerful king is gone and you have a new, fresh king on the throne. And this was a typical time for vassal states to try to rebel because they figure the new king might not be strong enough to keep up the strength of the old king.

Hank Smith: 00:52:55

Right.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:52:56

He might have seen an opportunity here to try to get out of this because his country's probably being bled dry by all the taxes. However, this ends up backfiring. Because remember what the vassal treaty stipulates. If you break the vassal treaty, we're going to come destroy you. It's this mob vengeance here. Skip down now to Verse 13. "Now in the 14th year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, King of Assyria," that's the new king here. "Sennacherib came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them." And there is a world of drama in that very simple line. In fact, I almost wonder if the writer is keeping this simple on purpose, because this was a hard thing to write there. Fenced cities is all your fortified cities, the ones that have walls, military units and everything. And how many of those cities did he take?

Hank Smith: 00:53:46

Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:53:46 All of them all.

Hank Smith: 00:53:46 All's a pretty high percentage word.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:53:49 Yes. This was devastating. The vast majority of Judah is ravished. This is bad. In fact, we have outside sources outside the Bible that give us an even bigger picture of how bad this was. So, the next first mentions Assyria sieging Judah's second most fortified spot besides Jerusalem, and that's Lachish, right there. So, it's mentioned in Verse 14. And you can go to Lachish today and there's the ruins, and you can still find the arrowheads and all the signs of the devastation that the Assyrians did there. Over in Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh, he was so pleased with conquering Lachish that he has this 100 foot wall relief dramatizing the destruction of the city. And it's in the British museum in London today. It is so dramatic and striking. And you can just Google this and see the images online. Since there were no movies in the ancient world, they would carve these images on stone with these reliefs.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:54:44 And it shows a frozen moment in time. And it's like Where's Waldo?, where there's a zillion things happening at once and you can spend forever looking at it because there's always something new to find. So, this Lachish scene, you've got arrows and flaming torches frozen in midair that the people in the wall are throwing down at these Assyrians. And you've got these Assyrian siege tanks stopped mid-pose as they're breaking down the wall. You've got depictions of as Assyrian soldiers piking Judahite prisoners. You've got a part where there's piles of hands that they have cut off from the prisoners, so they have no more hands. And there's images of Judahites being let away into captivity. So, it's just this frozen moment just showing all the drama of this scene here. So, it's the closest you can get to an ancient movie of this.

John Bytheway: 00:55:24 Sennacherib loved his moment so much, he made a movie.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:55:27 Yes, exactly. And the Assyrians, when they conquered you, if you broke the vassal treaty, they were brutal. Because they want to send a message to everyone else, "Don't you dare rebel and stop sending us money because we'll do the same thing to you." So, that's why they're putting people up on pikes, and why they're leaving piles of body parts. It's so that rumors will spread, and people will know, and nobody else will dare do this. So, this is what he's doing to the Kingdom of Judah. So, he conquers all the small places. And we also have not just Sennacherib's pictures of this, but we have his written records. So, there's one called the Sennacherib prism. It's a block of

stone like this, and it has writing all the way around it in a big circle, written in this hunah form script.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:56:05 And he describes it and he names more than 100,000 Judahites that he carried into captivity and exile. He talks about all the animals that he stole from Judah, all the booty and plunder that he took. And he talks about sieging Jerusalem and trapping Hezekiah in Jerusalem. He says, "I trapped him in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage." It's a really great line.
- Hank Smith: 00:56:26 Oh, wow.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:56:26 So, Sennacherib was quite pleased with his military victories here.
- Hank Smith: 00:56:29 How long after the destruction of the north was this? Was this pretty soon after that he had taken the northern kingdom?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:56:35 This is a good 20 years later.
- Hank Smith: 00:56:38 So, they had been here before.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:56:39 Well, the Assyrians had never had to conquer Judah before, because remember Ahaz did it voluntarily. But they had been to the north and conquered that already. It's hard to say why Hezekiah decided to break the vassal treaty and bring all this upon him. Maybe the taxes were bleeding him dry and he thought, we just got to risk it. Maybe he thought he could take advantage of the new king being on the throne. Maybe he thought that since he's being so righteous that God would keep this from happening.
- John Bytheway: 00:57:03 I think it's coming. In 2 Kings 19, he took all these cities in Judah, but he never took Jerusalem. That's coming up.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:57:09 Yeah, that's coming up. And in the Sennacherib Prism, that text, he never claims to conquer Jerusalem. He just says that he surrounded it. But he never claims to destroy it, which matches what we have in the Bible here. The book of Isaiah gives a lot of insight on this, because at the beginning of the book, is Isaiah talking about all this stuff. So Isaiah chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 is Isaiah talking to his contemporaries in Jerusalem and Judah and saying, "You guys are wicked. And the day of the Lord is coming. If you don't shape up, destruction is happening."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:57:37 And as Isaiah talks in those first several chapters, he gets more and more specific as he goes about what the destruction is

going to look like. So it starts off very generic. "Destruction's coming." And then in Isaiah 3, he mentions, "Your men are going to fall by the sword." So we get a hint there, this is going to be a war. And then at the end of Isaiah 5, it talks about God calling a foreign nation to come with horses and arrows and capturing them and killing them and bringing them away. So now we know it's a foreign invader. And then when you get to Isaiah 7, it finally names who the foreign invader is, and it's the king of Assyria, that for Judah's wickedness and rebellion, Assyria is going to come get them.

- Hank Smith: 00:58:14 Josh, doesn't he say, "The king of Assyria is going to come like a flood, and it's going to go all the way to your neck." Right? Not over your head.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:58:21 Exactly. There's a bunch of images. He is. He talks about flooding up to your neck. He talks about Assyria being like bees that are going to swarm you everywhere, shaving you like a razor. He says the hair and the beard and the feet, which is a euphemism for the genital hair. So it's like a close shave all over the place, very uncomfortable, in your intimate space, that the Assyrians are going to get right up to there so close. They won't actually kill you, but it's going to be super close. So Isaiah has very graphic imagery that he uses is to describe how devastating this Assyrian assault is going to be.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:58:53 But Isaiah also introduces the theme that a righteous remnant is going to survive. So this comes up in Isaiah 4, and this comes up in a little snippet in Isaiah 10. A bunch of little places, he'll pause for a little moment of hope, righteous remnant is going to barely survive this. In Isaiah 6 he calls it a tenth. A tenth is going to make it through here, the seed, holy seed that's going to regrow after the tree of Judah is chopped down here.
- Hank Smith: 00:59:17 And some of these chapters end up in the Book of Mormon, right?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:59:19 Exactly. A lot of these Isaiah chapters in that big chunk in second Nephi are all about this. It mentions the Assyrians. It mentions all these other things going on. So when you know the story, you can go back and read those and things make a little more sense, why he's talking about this so much.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:59:32 Back to our story there. 2 Kings 18. We get this devastation in the countryside, and then starting in verse 17, well, the Assyrian king Sennacherib is busy sieging Lachish. He sends an initial group to surround Jerusalem, to keep anybody from going in or out, because they're the next siege. And he's got a

representative, a royal official called the Rabshakeh, who goes to talk to the people in Jerusalem. In the King James Translation, it looks like it's the guy's name, Rabshakeh. We know that that's actually, in Acadian, that's the title of a royal official. So I'm going to say the Rabshakeh just because it's not his actual name. It means royal steward or something.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:00:09 You have the Assyrians, they now have surrounded Jerusalem. From Jerusalem, they could see the fire from Lachish. They knew that that was going down. Right? And they could see the fires from elsewhere. You can just imagine what this is like for the people now trapped inside the city, the terror that you are next. Jerusalem was the last place to be attacked.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:00:27 You've got the Rabshakeh, and he goes outside the wall. Hezekiah sends some of his royal ambassadors outside the wall, and they're going to have this conversation right there. And the rest of the chapter is this conversation they had, and it's full of lots of drama here. And the Rabshakeh, he shouts so that all the people of Jerusalem who were up on the walls watching this, they can hear the conversation.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:00:48 And in verse 19, he starts talking. "And the Rabshakeh said unto them, 'Speak ye now to Hezekiah, thus sayeth the great king, the king of Assyria, what confidence is this wherein thou trustest?'" And I told you to watch out for that word trust, because that's going to be the theme of his speech, is trust right here. And he's going to go through the rest of his speech. He's trying to demoralize everyone. This is classic political propaganda. Your enemy fights not as well if they're demoralized, if they have no hope. So he's trying to get them.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:01:18 And the interesting thing about this guy, is he knows how to get them where it hurts. We don't know if maybe he was an ambassador here earlier. I don't know what his personal experience is, but he knows how to get these people. We find out later, he's not speaking the international language of diplomacy, Aramaic, he's speaking Hebrew, the Judahite dialect of Hebrew, exactly what all the people in the city speak so that they can understand him. He knows about Hezekiah's reforms. He knows that Hezekiah has gotten rid of all their high places and said, "You shall only worship in Jerusalem." He knows about Jehovah and how Jehovah operates. He knows these people well enough that he knows just where it's going to hurt.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:01:56 So in verse 20, he says, "Thou sayest, but they are vain words, I have counsel and strength for war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that rebellest against me? Now behold, thou trustest

upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go through his hand and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust in him."

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:18 Apparently Judah had tried to make an alliance or something with Egypt, that maybe Egypt would come help them out against this invasion. And this guy now, for anyone in Jerusalem who's still holding out any hope that Egypt might come rescue them, he's going, " Ha."
- Hank Smith: 01:02:30 It's not going to happen.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:31 Egypt is like a stick, where if you're leaning on the stick, it's going to break and cut your hand. Pharaoh is not going to save you, so you can't trust in that. So now he's moving to religious concerns. Verse 22, "But if ye shall say, 'Well, we trust in the Lord our God, in Jehovah.'" And then the Rabshakeh says this, "Is not that he, Jehovah, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah have taken away and have said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem only.'"
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:03:02 So in other words, people who are worshipping at these other places beyond Jerusalem, all of them were worshipping Jehovah, but from Hezekiah's perspective, it was an illicit worship of Jehovah. So now he's playing against people who think, "What if Hezekiah got it wrong? What if that was okay to worship Jehovah in those places? And now because our leader got it wrong, we've actually acted against God by getting rid of all these worship sites." So he knows that well enough to play to any lingering fears people have about Hezekiah's approach there.
- Hank Smith: 01:03:32 And so, then trying to get them to rebel against their own king, right?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:03:36 Yeah. He's sowing these seeds of doubt. "What if Hezekiah is not carrying out Jehovah's will? And that by following him, you've actually been acting against Jehovah? And so, Jehovah is not going to save you now."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:03:47 And in verse 23, he schoolyard taunts here. "Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my Lord, the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part, set riders upon them." In other words, "Hey, we'll help you guys out. We'll give you 2,000 horses if you can find enough people left to ride them. Ha, ha, ha, but you don't." Right? It's just mean. He's pointing out how few soldiers they have left.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:04:12 In verse 24, he brings up the Egypt thing again. "How then wilt thou turn away from the face of one captain of the least of my master servants and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?" And then in verse 25, he does a new tactic, so he's trying all sorts of stuff here. So if one thing doesn't scare you, maybe another thing will. Verse 25, "Am I now come up without the Lord, without Jehovah, against this place to destroy it?" He's like, "Do you think I'm coming here apart from Jehovah's will?" He says, "The Lord, Jehovah, said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'" So he's claiming that Jehovah is on his side. He might be just making up stuff. You might think, "Who's going to believe that?" But he's figuring maybe he'll get somebody.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:04:52 If he's really familiar with what's been going on in Jerusalem, he might be actually playing into a sub-current here, because remember in Isaiah 5, Isaiah has this verse where he says, "The Lord, Jehovah, is going to raise an end sign to a nation from far, a flag or a banner and call them swiftly to come and attack you." So in other words, you've got this image that Isaiah paints of Jehovah waving a flag to a foreign nation and going, "Yoo-hoo, over here. Come destroy my people right here." And then they come and destroy them.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:05:24 So Isaiah has been clearly saying that Assyria is going to kind of work as Jehovah's tool to punish the wicked here. I almost wonder if this guy is aware of some of that talk and he's kind of twisting it into something here that Jehovah is totally backing them up in all the bad things that they do, but basing it off of something that the prophet has actually said. Whether it's destroying these people's confidence in Egypt for military aid, or it's destroying their confidence that Hezekiah really was carrying out the will of God, or having them question at all that Jehovah really is on their side, he's introducing all these ways that he might demoralize these people and get them not to trust either in Hezekiah or to trust in the Lord.
- Hank Smith: 01:06:05 Yeah. He's going to say later, "Don't let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you." Yeah. Oh, man.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:06:12 And then in verse 26, the ambassadors say, "Please stop speaking in Judahite, speak in the international language of the diplomats here. We can understand that." But then, he taunts them back and says, in verse 27, "I'm not here just to talk to you. I'm here to talk to everyone up on the wall there, all the people there." And then in verse 28, he cries even louder to all the people to be able to hear. He says to all the people in the city, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria." And then he continues in the next line of attack. "Let not Hezekiah

deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, 'The Lord will surely deliver us. And the city will not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.'" So there he's mocking. Hezekiah has apparently been telling the people, "Trust in the Lord and He'll protect you." And now this guy is mocking that.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:07:01 Verse 31, "Hearken not Hezekiah." Then down, let's jump to verse 33-35. He makes this argument. "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?" Like, "We've conquered a lot of places already, and we have had unmitigated success. We have a perfect track record." 34, "Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?"
- Hank Smith: 01:07:38 Yeah. "You're going to be just like them."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:07:40 And that's kind of brutal logic, because he's got a point. "Every nation has its gods, even Samaria, which worshiped the same God the people of Judah do, and every single one of them has fallen. So who are you to think that your God is going to be any different?"
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:07:56 And by the way, I talked about Book of Mormon connections, so this is one of them. Once you know the story here, it's easy to recognize what's going on in the Isaiah chapters in 2 Nephi. Because for example, 2 Nephi 20, which is quoting Isaiah 10, is describing all this drama, and it's got the Rabshakeh's speech here in a very short form. So 2 Nephi 20:8, "For he sayeth," this is now the Assyrians or maybe even the Rabshakeh specifically, "Are not my princes altogether kings?" Like princes in Assyria are as good as kings everywhere else. "Is not Calno as Carchemishme? Is not Hamath as Arpad? Is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath founded the kingdoms of the idols and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria, shall not I, as I have done unto Samaria and to her idols do so to Jerusalem and to her idols?"
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:08:42 It's the same idea and some of the same wording as the Rabshakeh speech over here, that "Just like I've destroyed all the other gods in all the other cities, including Samaria and its gods, I'm going to do the same thing to Jerusalem and its Gods." So here Isaiah is kind of doing a poetic kind of summary of the

Assyrian's attitude here. And the logic really is brutal, because he's got a point. He's right.

- Hank Smith: 01:09:02 This would be scary, Josh. This would be like, "Okay. I believe him." Because one, you've put doubt in the king. "Now you've got me doubting God." President Benson might call this the evil design strategies and doctrines of the devil, right? This is how he works. "I'm going to place doubt in your heart about everything you thought was true."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:09:22 The trust is so important, because again, that's the motif here, your trust. "Who are you going to trust?" That's how he opens the speech. "What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?" And I think for all of us today, that is a great question to really ponder as you live your life of faith. What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? What do you trust in?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:09:40 And today you read in the news a lot about whether it's Americans or members of the church, that there's a crisis of institutional trust. People don't trust the government. People don't trust each other. People don't trust scientists. People don't trust the First Presidency and the Twelve. A lot of people have talked about a trust crisis here in the 21st century.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:09:59 I think this is such a powerful story about how you can have these voices in the world that are actively working to undermine trust, whether that's in the prophet, your church leaders, in God, and they're doing it very strategically where they know it's going to hurt you the most, just like this guy. He's speaking their language. He knows the history that they've had. He knows religious weak spots and vulnerable points, and he targets those so precisely.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:10:27 And I think today about all the voices that are saying, "You can't trust the prophet. You can't trust the First Presidency. You can't trust God." And they'll use a lot of logic and a lot of really good reasons to try to build this case that God and His servants and the institutions are untrustworthy. And it provokes this real big moment. You have to figure out, "What voice am I going to listen to here?"
- Hank Smith: 01:10:49 This could easily become a crisis of faith for a Judahite in Jerusalem.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:10:54 Chapter 19 is about Hezekiah's reaction to this. It doesn't talk about the other people, but I'm imagining similar things are going through their own heads. Hezekiah is not there at the

wall, but messengers bring him the report of what the Rabshakeh said. What Hezekiah does, in 19:3, is he sends messengers to the prophet, to Hezekiah, to say, "Well, what's your take on this?"

- Hank Smith: 01:11:15 He's going to Isaiah, correct?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:11:18 Isaiah and Hezekiah are very close, and Hezekiah goes to him for advice. The Jewish tradition is that Isaiah married Hezekiah's daughter, so if that's true, they're also father-in-law, son-in-law. So whatever it is, they've got a close relationship here. So Hezekiah sends a message to Isaiah in verses 3 and 4, to say, "This is what the Rabshakeh said. What does the Lord have to say about this?"
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:11:38 And then, the servants of Hezekiah go back to Isaiah, and Isaiah has got this very short two-verse revelation to give his take on this. So in verse 6, it has the revelation. "Thus sayeth the Lord, 'Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and shall return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.'"
- Hank Smith: 01:12:06 "Be not afraid."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:12:07 It's very short, compared to the long speech the Rabshakeh gave, but it's saying, "Don't worry. He's not going to win. He's going to flee. And the king of Assyria is going to die there."
- Hank Smith: 01:12:16 I love that small, little response, Josh. Long, long taunt, "Don't worry about it."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:12:23 And then, interestingly enough, the Rabshakeh is not done. The speech in the previous chapter was to all the people in Jerusalem. But now, in verses 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13, the Rabshakeh sends a letter to Hezekiah addressing him personally. And it's a personalized version of that speech to Hezekiah. So this is what it says in verse 10. "Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah, king of Judah, saying, 'Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, 'Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.'" So before, it was telling the people, "Don't trust Hezekiah when he says, 'God will save you.'" And now he's saying to Hezekiah directly, "You shouldn't trust in Jehovah when He says He'll save you."
- Hank Smith: 01:13:06 I should laugh at this, but this is intense.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:13:10 It is. Now 11, 12, 13, he has just a little mini version of the speech with the same logic. He lists all the places they've already destroyed and says, "We have a perfect track record here. Why would you think you're the exception?" We've got to pause here and just appreciate the gravity of this moment, because they've surrounded them. We're kind of in a situation where we're in the last night of the siege, right? Tomorrow is going to be the battle, and this is it. And Hezekiah has to decide now. "I've got this revelation from Isaiah. I've got this letter from the Rabshakeh. Which one am I going to trust?" That's the crisis moment he faces.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:13:43 And we've got to imagine here, I don't think it's a situation where it's either, "I'm going to trust the Lord and sit here and do nothing. Or I'm not going to trust the Lord and sit here and do nothing." He probably had some actions he could take. They're going to have very serious consequences. And the reason I think that is because why else is the Rabshakeh sending him one final letter on the eve before the battle, trying to implore him to make a decision.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:14:07 Reading between the lines, I think maybe the Assyrians have left an offer on the table, like, "Hey, give yourself up and your family and we'll kill you guys, but maybe we'll spare the rest of the city." Something like that. It's standard procedure. If you're going to conquer a government, you've got to kill the royal family. So maybe they've made some kind of offer, but will spare the others. So he's got real, real consequences weighing on him. Should he trust in the Lord, and everybody might live? Or should he sacrifice his own wife and kids to get killed and save everybody else? What should he do? But people are going to die if he makes the wrong move, so that is just weighing on him.

Hank Smith: 01:14:43 When I teach this to my class, I say, "The Golden State Warriors are coming to play Provo High." And Isaiah is saying, "Play them. You'll win. You'll be fine." So I'm writing this in my scriptures. "Well Hezekiah believe Isaiah and the Lord or Rabshakeh?"

John Bytheway: 01:15:00 Isaiah's not very specific. It's not just, "Play them. You'll win." It's just, "Don't be afraid." He doesn't say how this is going to happen at all. It's just, "Well, can you give us more detail, Isaiah? Why shouldn't I be afraid?"

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:15:12 Yeah. Is it going to be a flood, a hailstorm? Are the Egyptian's finally going to come? What is this going to be? He doesn't say.

John Bytheway:	01:15:17	It's in 2 Nephi 20, which is Isaiah 10, the same thing. "Be not afraid of the Assyrians." And then the rest of 2 Nephi 20 is, "Here they come." And it lists the cities in order. They're getting closer and closer.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:15:31	These chapters in 2 Nephi are always flipping between talking about how bad the Assyrians will destroy you, but also, don't be afraid because you'll be saved.
John Bytheway:	01:15:38	"They've taken all those fence cities in Judah, but don't be afraid."
John Bytheway:	01:15:46	Please join us for Part Two of this podcast.



John Bytheway:	00:00:02	Welcome to Part Two of this week's podcast.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:00:07	This is a moment, and I think a lot of people go through this, maybe not with such stakes as Hezekiah did, but you go through these moments where you really have to search deep into your soul and ask yourself, who do I trust? What is my faith? What confidence is this wherein I have trusted? Where you have to just reach deep down and it's not about, do I go to church or not or do I fulfill a calling or not? It's really deep down, what do I believe? When push comes to shove and I'm against the wall and I have no options left, what do I believe? I had a moment like this on my mission. I got back to my apartment at night and got a phone call from a missionary at the office that said, "Hey, the mission president's been trying to reach you all day, where you been?" And he said, "Okay, stay next to the phone. I'm going to have him call you."
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:00:55	And I hung up the phone and I sat down and I thought, what could this be about? And then it hit me that the only example I had seen in my mission of where the president unexpectedly call someone is from a death in the family and he's got to notify you. So I don't know if I was jumping the gun or not, but I was convinced someone in my family had died. So I sat there just in shock and I pulled out a photo of my family that I had in my scriptures to show people, and I was just looking at my mom, my dad, my brother Mark, Colin, Alec, trying to think, who is it? Which one of them is dead? And minute after minute ticked by and I'm thinking, how am I going to react when he tells me about this? And you've got to understand, I'd had no deaths in my family up to this point. Even my grandparents are all alive.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:01:37	I'd never had to experience that or process those kind of emotions before. And now I was 100% convinced in a few minutes. He's going to tell me either that a parent or a brother has died. And so I'm spiraling and I'm just thinking about everything. I haven't seen these people in months and months either so that made it worse. And this thought suddenly just struck across my brain, do you believe that if they're dead, that

they'll be resurrected? Do you really believe that you'll see them again or are you afraid that this is it and you'll never see them again? And it was one of the scariest thoughts I think I'd ever experienced in my life because just asking the question makes you vulnerable. What do I really believe? Wherein is the confidence wherein I have trusted? I don't know how long this was, this whole period of time was just weird, but I sincerely asked myself the question and I suddenly had the self realization, I do believe that.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:02:36 I 100% believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and I believe that I'm going to see them again. I may be sad, but I know I'll see them again. It's going to be okay. And I sincerely, truly, to my core, believe that. And realizing that I did believe that was such a relief. And it was a defining moment in my life where the Gospel wasn't theoretical. I really had to truly deep down, what do I believe? It's not my parents anymore. It's, what do I believe? And I realized based on the spiritual experience I have had and the spiritual experience as I've seen on my mission, I completely believe that. It's going to be okay. And, again, it was such a flood of relief knowing that I do believe that and knowing that it would be okay. And a few minutes later, the president called and it turned out no one was dead. It was something else. So that was okay.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:28 But you had this moment?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:03:29 That was a moment where I really learned something about myself and I think a lot of people who've gone through similar things where it's a process of self-discovery and learning. I know other people where they have that moment and they realize that their faith is wanting, and that's something that they don't feel good about and they realize, "I need to do something about this. I need to build my faith. I need to seek those spiritual experiences because I can't say with confidence that I have that faith in those things." We all go through that differently and there's different times when that comes and we have different journeys there. That's fine. But these moments do come where you have to ask yourself, it's not theoretical anymore. It's not abstract theology. Push comes to shove here, do I believe the Gospel and am I willing to put my money where my mouth is or put my family's life on the line?
- Hank Smith: 00:04:14 Right.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:04:14 That's what Hezekiah was facing here.

Hank Smith: 00:04:15 You've got 2 Kings 19 as this setup of, I've got a prophet pulling me one way, I've got an enemy pulling me the other way, and I've got to decide who I believe, who I'm going to go with.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:04:29 Trust is the issue here, and we go through this today. I've got people I know from my wards and my friends who have listened to voices undermining trust in the prophet and they've left the church. It breaks my heart when that happens, but these voices are very sophisticated and they're very powerful and very influential. And often, honestly, they'll make a lot of accurate points. The Rabshakeh had history on his side. He has destroyed all these places.

Hank Smith: 00:04:55 Maybe Hezekiah made a mistake.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:04:57 And the way that he claims he's acting on God's side today, how many times do people say, "Don't listen to the First Presidency because they've got this wrong, but the position I'm advocating is actually what the Lord wants"? I hear that argument all the time. People be like, "Don't listen to what the First Presidency and the 12 say about the Lord's standards of chastity, because not only are the prophets getting those standards wrong, those standards hurt people. Therefore, you should listen to what I have to say about this and actually the Lord backs me anyway." Or on the other side, you might get people saying, "Don't listen to what the First Presidency and the 12 has said about prevention of disease, because they've got this wrong and their counsel will actually hurt you. So listen to what I have to say. The Lord would back me up in the end." Whatever the issue is, there's a lot of them, people trying to undermine trust in the First Presidency and the 12 and the promises of the Lord. And we're all deciding, what voices are we going to listen to?

John Bytheway: 00:05:47 It's interesting that the youth theme this year is Proverbs 3, "The trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding." And this royal, what did you call him, royal steward is reasoning with his own understanding and trying to get them to use their own understanding. And it's interesting how many he's saying not to trust here. And I love how brief Isaiah is, "Don't be afraid of the Assyrians." He's looking you eye to eye and you've got to decide, who do I trust here? Wow. It's a great story.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:06:17 Yeah. And I don't think Isaiah's revelation needs to be long here because, like we see in the Book of Isaiah, he's already given plenty of revelations about this. So all he needs to do is restate what's been said. You don't need a new revelation here. Just trust in the revelation that's come.

Hank Smith: 00:06:30 Josh, wouldn't you say that we're all going to be in Hezekiah's position. I think that's what we're getting to here, is that we're all going to have Rabshakehs in our life. We're all going to have prophets. And look what Hezekiah does. He receives all this information, lays it out in front of the Lord, and verse 15, "Hezekiah prayed."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:06:47 Verse 14, where does he go, Hank?

Hank Smith: 00:06:50 He went up to the house of the Lord, spread it before the Lord, and Hezekiah prayed before the Lord.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:06:56 And isn't that great, that when he is in this crisis moment, he goes to the temple? And then this is such a beautiful prayer. I think this is one of the most sincere heart filled prayers you could find in scripture when you consider all that this guy has on the line. Verse 15, "Oh Lord, God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God even thou alone. Of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth." This is testimony that he's bearing right here. "Lord, bow down my ear." And here you know what's riding on this prayer. He's pouring everything into this. "Open, Lord, thine eyes and see. Here are the words of Sennacherib, which have sent him to reproach the living God," and then this is interesting. He actually in the prayer responds to the logic of the Rabshakeh voice, "of a truth, Lord, the Kings of a Syria have destroyed the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:07:54 So he acknowledges that a lot of what the Rabshakeh has said is actually true. It's not all made up lies. I meet so many people that are having a faith crisis and they've read something on the internet about something a prophet did or something from church history and they'll come to me and partly they're hoping that I will disprove whatever they've said and said, "No, that's just fake anti-Mormon stuff. What are the assumptions you're making about this fact?" For example, people might say, "Well, this prophet said something wrong and therefore he can't be a prophet." They don't realize their assumption is that to be a prophet you always have to do everything perfectly.

Hank Smith: 00:08:27 They don't question that assumption.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:08:28 My assumption is that prophets don't have to do that. My framework is prophets are humans, they make mortal mistakes, but they're still prophets. They're still the Lord's mouthpiece when they speak as a prophet. We approach the same historical fact with different frameworks and come away with different conclusions. So often this is a matter of evaluating what our

assumptions are and bringing a faithful framework to the question, not a framework of doubt or disbelief. So I think Hezekiah does that here. He and the Rabshakeh both agree on the fact that the Assyrians have a track record of destroying these other nations and that their gods didn't do anything to save them. But he questions the assumption, the framework that the Rabshakeh brings to that. The Rabshakeh assumes their gods are powerless in the wake of the Assyrian gods and their army. So their gods were not powerful enough to save them.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:09:16 But his Hezekiah's framework is, actually, those weren't even gods, so destroying those countries proves nothing. So he says that here in verse 18, "They have cast their gods in the fire for," and here's his different framework, "for they were no gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore, they have destroyed them." So I love how he agrees with the Rabshakeh on the fact, but changes the framework to interpret the fact. And that's a powerful model for us too. So many problems get better when we use the correct framework. In verse 19, he finishes the prayer. "Now, therefore, oh Lord, our God, I beseech thee, save thou us, save us out of his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God even thou only."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:10:10 So this closing petition, again, closing with testimony, and I think that's his closing powerful plea, "Please save us." And the verb there in Hebrew is *yeshah*. It means to save, to deliver, to rescue. And, interestingly enough, this is in the root of Isaiah's name. Isaiah's name *Yeshayahu* means Yahweh or Jehovah, Yahweh is the Hebrew pronunciation of Jehovah, is salvation. Yahweh saves. So Isaiah's name is that message. And also in the name, Joshua, Yehoshua has the same thing. Basically, Yahweh is salvation. And just as a fun little connection here, the name Joshua between the Old and New Testaments, there's a shortened version of the name that becomes popular, Yeshua, instead, where you take off the Yahweh part and just leaves the word salvation there. And then that becomes the name, of course, of the Savior, immortality, salvation.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:11:09 That's why the angel says to Joseph and Matthew, "You shall call his name Jesus for he shall save his people in their sins." There's a word play there, because Jesus' name means salvation. And what is he going to do? He's going to save. So as he prays to the pre-mortal Jesus Christ here, Jehovah, to save them, I like that connection, he's like, "You're Jesus. Do this Jesus thing. Save us. We need help." And all of us, we might not have Assyrian on our doorstep, but all of us have those prayers, save us. We are desperate. We've tried to do our best. There's

nothing else we can do. No one else can save us. You're the only one left. Please save us.

- Hank Smith: 00:11:48 Josh, something I never realized is that Hezekiah also has the weight of, "I did this, I rebelled against the King of Assyria. I'm partly to blame here. This isn't just about me trusting in the Lord. But this is about me, I made a mistake. I don't even know if it's a mistake, but I'm partly to blame for this situation." That, oh.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:12:08 Whether he was to blame or not, I imagine how many times he second guessed his political decisions here and what it's brought upon his country. Now, of course, the Book of Isaiah, Isaiah frames it as he tried to preach repentance, the people were wicked, and he tried to warn them and this is the consequence. So it might not all be Hezekiah's fault. That doesn't mean he doesn't feel the weight as the king of all the death and destruction.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:26 What is the Lord's response here? This is epic. Second Kings 19 may be one of my favorite chapters of scripture now that you've showed us all this.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:12:36 Second Nephi 20 has the same story. So in verse 20 now, Isaiah comes to Hezekiah, and interesting, he doesn't send messengers this time. He shows up in person and he says, "Hey, guess what? You passed the test." And he gives him a much longer revelation. Short revelation before, that's all you're going to get to balance in your trial of faith here, but now that you've passed the test and you've proved that you believed to your core in Jehovah and you're going to trust him no matter what, here's a longer revelation that'll come to you now. And this is what the Lord says. Then the revelation starts in verse 20 and it goes all the way to verse 33. So it's a long revelation. And it starts off in verse 20.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:13:20 "Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Thus sayeth the Lord God of Israel, that which thou has prayed to me against Sennacherib, King of Assyria, I have heard.'" A good testimony, right? God hears your prayers. Anyway, we don't have to read the rest in detail, but it's mostly a long thing about how he's going to destroy the Assyrians who have blasphemed against him. And then in verse 29 and 30, he starts talking to Hezekiah again and talks about, "You are going to regrow here." Judah's going to survive. There's going to be this righteous remnant that will survive the destruction and will regrow, and he promises that in verse 30. "The remnant that is escaped of the House of Judah shall yet again take root downward and bear fruit upward." Tie that back

to Isaiah 6 or 2 Nephi 16 where Judah was described as a tree that's going to get chopped down, but Isaiah's told that 10th will survive. There's going to be the holy seed whose substance in life is in it that will regrow.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:14:20 Isaiah loves using this tree imagery to describe Judah and the branches. And then, in verse 31, the Lord promises, "For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant and they that escape out of Mount Zion, the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this." He finishes in verse 34 by promising, "I will defend this city to save it for my own sake and for my servant David's sake." That's a reference back to what we were reading earlier in 2 Samuel 7, where he promises David, "No matter what, your descendants will rule on the throne. I'm never going to change the dynasty up. Since Sennacherib is planning to end the Davidic dynasty, I'm not going to let that happen." That's part of that promise to David here.
- John Bytheway: 00:14:58 I love this and I think it's significant that Hezekiah says this prayer to the Lord but it is answered through the prophet. I love that. That tells us we can trust living prophets. The prophet says, "The Lord heard your prayer and here's what he said."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:15:15 Then actually the revelation's over and in verse 35 we return to narrative and it tells us how the Lord saves them. "And it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians 100 four score and 5,000. And when they arose early in the morning," meaning in the JST, those who were left, the survivors of the Assyrian army, "arose in the morning. Behold they were all dead corpses." So then the Assyrian army tucks tail and they flee back to Assyria. Just like Isaiah had predicted in verse 36 and 37, the King of Assyria eventually gets his comeuppance back home because his own sons murder him.
- John Bytheway: 00:15:53 And so I love that you brought up that extra biblical source where he said, "Yeah, I had Hezekiah pent up like a bird in a cage," because that's all he could do. He surrounded Jerusalem, but he never got in because of this miracle. And I think that's, without trying to be, one of the more humorous verses, "When they arose, they were all dead corpses." I didn't know that JST had tweaked that a little bit.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:16:19 Yeah, it's not in the footnotes there, but the grammar's weird because it's like, well, are the dead people seeing the corpses? So Joseph Smith clarifies that, no, it's those that were left, looked around and, "Wow, most of our army is dead."

John Bytheway: 00:16:29 It sounds like they woke up dead.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:16:31 And so you get this miraculous last minute intervention right there against all odds.

John Bytheway: 00:16:38 There's the other side of, "Be not afraid of the Assyrians. I have a scourge prepared, and 185,000 like that."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:16:47 In Second Nephi, it picks this up. So 2 Nephi 20 verse 12, "Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord has performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and upon Jerusalem," meaning when he's used the Assyrians as a tool to punish the wicked and do what he needed them to do, "then I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria and the glory of his high looks." So the Assyrians don't get off the hook. They think they've been doing this because they're so powerful, but it's only because the Lord has let them, and when they've done what he needs them to do, then he's going to punish them for their own cruelty.

John Bytheway: 00:17:16 Now, I want you to say that again because I want to make sure I remember it. So the King of Assyria, Sennacherib, however you say it, goes back and his sons kill him?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:17:26 So this is 2 Kings 19:37, last verse of the chapter. He's worshiping in the house of this pagan god and then two of his sons strike him dead.

John Bytheway: 00:17:35 Is this because he wasn't successful or just family infighting?

Hank Smith: 00:17:40 Political intrigue, I think.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:17:42 It doesn't say. I think in the context of this story, it's just there to show you that, that prophecy's fulfilled and that God took care of him there. We don't know what the sons were thinking, but I imagine there's some family dysfunction there.

Hank Smith: 00:17:53 There's a great paragraph in the Bible Dictionary under Assyria and it reads to me like a movie trailer.

Hank Smith: 00:18:00 "All Palestine now lay at the feet of the Assyrian. One man alone, the prophet Isaiah, who had never ceased to warn the Judeans against their vanity and their reliance on Egypt remained undaunted. And encouraged Hezekiah not to surrender his stronghold." And then it just says briefly, "the prophet's confidence was justified. A great disaster fell on Sennacherib's host, and he was obliged to return to Nineveh."

So he's obliged. Obligated, yeah. I think I'll go now 185,000 soldiers are dead. Let's go home.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:18:36 Great. That's a great line. The prophet's confidence was justified and I think we're going to, throughout history, in the latter days. See that again and again.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:43 Oh, Josh, this has been awesome. And we still have another story to go, right? With another king.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:18:50 Yeah, actually then there's a short, Hezekiah follow up here in chapter 20. So Hezekiah, like we've talked about, is amazing. He is, my sister-in-law Kimberly told me that she named my nephew Hezekiah because she admires just how he was so steady and righteous with bad generations before him and bad generations after. How he does this. His story though, in chapter 20 gets a little bit more nuanced and complicated.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:15 So first in chapter 20, this is now like the epilogue to the Hezekiah story. He gets sick and Isaiah tells him, set your house in order, because you're about to die. And then Hezekiah says a prayer where he asks the Lord to extend his life so he can keep doing good in things. And then Isaiah says, okay, the Lord has heard you and he's going to give you 15 more years of life. So that's all good so far. In the version of the story quoted in the book of Isaiah, it adds this lengthy prayer of thanks that Hezekiah gives. So that's beautiful there too. You don't get that in Kings.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:45 But then things take a bit of a turn at chapter 20, verse 12. You've got Babylon, which right now is not the superpower Assyria still is, but Babylon's a relatively minor kingdom. They're a vassal of the Assyrians. But in a hundred years, they're going to be the big, bad empire. They're starting to come on the horizon here as being more important in the geopolitical scene. And you've got these Babylonians who heard that Hezekiah recovered from a sickness and they send letters and a present to Hezekiah like some ambassadors show up.
- John Bytheway: 00:20:12 Crumbl cookies.
- Hank Smith: 00:20:15 Sorry, Josh. John said Crumbl cookies. They delivered some Crumbl cookies.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:20:19 Yes.
- Hank Smith: 00:20:19 Happy that you're okay.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:20:21 Yeah, some Crumbl cookies. So they send letters and a present and they show up to Jerusalem. And in verse 13 it says Hezekiah hearkened unto them. And apparently this is a mistake. As the rest of the story will show. Something about hearkening unto them is not good. And then it says that he goes and shows them everything like that's in the palace and all the treasures and everything that he has, the nice stuff, the gold, everything. He shows them a complete tour. Isaiah comes to Hezekiah after and is like, who are those guys? And Hezekiah tells him. And then Isaiah says, what did you show them? And Hezekiah says, I showed them everything. And then apparently this bad. Again, he shouldn't have done that. And Isaiah makes this prediction that someday the Babylonians are going to come here and take all the stuff that you just showed off to them and they're going to carry it away to Babylon and there's going to be nothing left. And they're going to take away your sons all to the palace of the king of Babylon.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:21:16 So this is a prediction of the Babylonian exile in a hundred years. And then 19 Hezekiah's like, well, good is the word of the Lord. At least it won't happen in my days. That's kind of what he says right there. Which also doesn't put him in a very flattering light. There's different ways you can read what he's saying there-
- Hank Smith: 00:21:32 But you should be concerned. Yeah.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:21:34 A lot of people understand it to be this unflattering thing. Well, at least my days will end fine. And it won't happen until after my time. So at the very end of Hezekiah's life, there's this kind of negative story where he messed up. It's kind of tied to the Babylon in exile. It's going to kind of precipitate that or foreshadow it at least.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:21:50 So this is an interesting thing because it's a reminder that as good as Hezekiah was, he wasn't perfect. Which as a follow up to our lesson on, you should listen to your church leaders and the prophet. This is also an important caveat to that. That that doesn't mean that they're going to be perfect and not make mistakes. And in fact, the Book of Isaiah develops that line in an interesting way.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:22:11 So if it's okay to jump out of 2 Kings and go to Isaiah chapter nine. First seven verses of Isaiah chapter nine, talk about the birth of a Judahite king, who's going to be like amazing. It talks about the land's going to be in darkness, but we're going to see a great light. He's going to break the yolk of the burden, the rod of the oppressor. He's going to help out these warriors. Verse six, for unto us a child is born unto us a son is given and the

government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end upon the throne of David. And upon his kingdom to order it, to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of host will perform this.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:22:54 Now a lot of biblical scholars think that in this of initial reading, this might have been in context referring to Hezekiah. He's finally a good king, who's born the Judahite government's going to be on his shoulder and he's going to set things right. He's going to get rid of the oppressors, have people worship the Lord and he's going to bring in this golden age. And so you encounter this in the Book of Isaiah. By the way, the story of Hezekiah is both before and right after this. So it's set right in context of the stuff all about him.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:23:22 However later in the Book of Isaiah, in fact, Isaiah 36, 37, 38, 39 are simply quoting 2 King's 18, 19 20. So it quotes the whole Hezekiah narrative there. And it's almost like the story sets you up to think Hezekiah might be the fulfillment of this prophecy. Because notice at the end of Isaiah 9:7, it has this closing line, "The zeal of the Lord of host will perform this." There's only one other place in the scriptures where you get that line. And it's here in the 2 King's 19 story, again, which is in Isaiah as well, where God promises Hezekiah, I'm going to save Jerusalem. I'm going to get rid of the Assyrians and the zeal of the Lord of host shall do this. That 2 King's 19:31. The only two places where that line appears and biblical authors, typically, if they stick a strange line in places like that, they want you to see the connection.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:24:14 So you read in Isaiah 9 about this king who's going to come and rule forever and usher in the golden age. And then you see that line there about the zeal repeated in the Hezekiah story and it sets you up to think, oh, maybe this is the guy. He's going to do it. Hezekiah is the guy. But then by the end of the Hezekiah story, the things take a turn and you find out, no, his kingdom's not going to last forever. The Babylonians are going to come destroy it ultimately. And you realize, oh shoot, Hezekiah's not the guy. At least not fully. He kind of started off as that. He did a lot of the stuff that this prophecy says, but ultimately his throne isn't lasting forever and there's no peace without end. He blew it on the last lap.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:24:53 And so it sets you up then to see Hezekiah is not the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy, but he can be a type of the person

who will come and ultimately fulfill that prophecy. He's a foreshadowing of the person who will do this and not stumble at the last lap. The person who will be perfect, the person who will rule on the throne forever, the person who will finally set everything right permanently. And of course that's the Savior. And that's why we love to read those lines at Christmas. Because this is about Jesus, even more so than Hezekiah, as the Savior does that. And the reminder that if you've got a human leader as good as they might be, they're eventually going to disappoint you. Hezekiah is a reminder of that too. If you look hard enough or wait long enough, whether it's Joseph Smith or your bishop or somebody they're going to disappoint you eventually, they're not perfect. But the Savior of course is going to do everything that they can do, but perfectly. And we can trust him not to stumble and let us down.

- John Bytheway: 00:25:47 Yeah. I have a question about the very last verse of 2 King's 20. Some of our listeners may have been to Hezekiah's tunnel before and have walked through that. That last verse seems to indicate this is about Hezekiah's tunnel. Was that tunnel where they tunneled from a spring outside of the walls of Jerusalem as they existed then and brought them into the pool of Siloam. Was that a direct response to the threat of the Assyrian or to just any war?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:26:16 We think so they were getting their water source for Jerusalem from the Gihon stream, outside the walls. And they knew if they would get sieged, we will be cut off from our water source. You didn't last very long that way. So apparently anticipating that this might happen, they built this underground tunnel to connect to the water source and then lead the water underneath the wall so that they can get access to it from within the city, if they're cut off from the outside. So they're digging the tunnel from the outside and from the inside and underground, they have two separate tunnel diggers picking and picking and picking through the rock until the tunnel meets in the middle. And then the water's able to flow between the two.
- John Bytheway: 00:26:51 It's a great story if you've been there and you'll see it on the maps. In our Bible maps, you'll see it a little red dotted line for Hezekiah's tunnel to bring the water in. So that was anticipation of a siege. That's why he built that?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:27:05 That's our best guess. Yeah. Because it guarantees that we have access to water inside the city, assuming we can't get out.
- John Bytheway: 00:27:09 Wonderful.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:27:10 The situation of the people here in Jerusalem and the choice they have to make, it reminds me a lot of Elder Bednar's talk from the April 2022 general conference. It was, "But we heeded them not." He gets that line from the story of Lehi's dream and the mocking and taunting of those in the great and spacious building and how those who grasped the iron rod and ate the fruit of the tree had to not heed the taunting and distractions from those in the building. And Elder Bednar gives this insight, "The doctrine of Christ written with the spirit of the living God and fleshy tablets of our hearts increases our capacity to heed not the many distractions, taunts and diversions in our fallen world.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:27:51 For example, faith focused in and on the Lord, Jesus Christ fortifies us with spiritual strength. Faith in the Redeemer is a principle of action and of power. As we act in accordance with the truths of the gospel, we are blessed with the spiritual capacity to press forward through the challenges of mortality while focusing on the joys the Savior offers to us." And I thought that was such a wonderful thought about how we're in the same circumstances today. We have distractions, mocking, taunts, and diversions. People trying to tell us not to trust in the Lord, not to trust in the church and focusing on the joys of the gospel and our Redeemer helps us be able to sift through those distracting and the taunts and the diversions from the true voice we should be listening to.

John Bytheway: 00:28:35 Wow. You mentioned social media and President Nelson also, what was that statement he made? If most of the information you get comes from social media your ability to feel the spirit of the Lord will be diminished. And the same sort of who are you heeding type of a question. And I love that Lehi says three times in a row, "The tree by which I stood." It's like, I'm staying right here, type of thing. This is what I'm staying focused on.

Hank Smith: 00:29:01 Josh. How do you say Rabshakeh?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:29:04 I think the way it's normally pronounced is Rab as like one word and then shakeh. Rabshakeh. At least that's how the Hebrew does it. And I listened to it. This is one of the ones I listened to on YouTube. And that was the most popular pronunciation I heard.

Hank Smith: 00:29:18 For everybody listening. Josh, this has been just so great. We are all going to have Rabshakeh in our life-

John Bytheway: 00:29:26 Texting us.

Hank Smith: 00:29:26 ... There are lots on social media, texting you. The taunting, the how can you possibly believe in this. Don't listen, go to the Isaiahs of your life and listen to them.

John Bytheway: 00:29:41 Go to the temple like Hezekiah did and lay it before the Lord. That's so beautiful.

Hank Smith: 00:29:46 Pray. Oh my goodness, Josh. This has just been moving to me.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:29:52 So then after Hezekiah we move on. 2 Kings, chapter 21, we're going to go through just fast here. It has the reigns of Hezekiah's bad son Manasseh and his bad son, Amon who it just mostly spends its time talking about just how wicked these guys were. And it catalogs all the different ways that they were wicked. Manasseh here, it says he was actually so wicked, led the people to such wickedness that it kind of set Judah's doom. That now they're kind of a ticking clock. You can delay the fall of Judah with righteousness, but it's the way the narrator presents it here, we're moving towards that now because he set them on such a bad trajectory.

Hank Smith: 00:30:29 And Josh, would this be about the time Lehi's parents are maybe alive in the southern kingdom? Are we getting close to Lehi's moment?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:30:40 This is right in there. So Amon's son Josiah reigns from starting about 640. So I'm assuming by that point that Lehi is alive. He's living the life he had about this time. So it's hard to say-

Hank Smith: 00:30:51 Exactly.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:30:52 Depends on how old Lehi was. But this is when Lehi comes on the scene.

Hank Smith: 00:30:55 So this is the world he's born into. They've heard about how great Hezekiah was, but his sons are not doing well.

John Bytheway: 00:31:02 Josh, the story we just read about Hezekiah, does that play into the idea the people of Jerusalem say to Lehi, "Jerusalem can't be destroyed."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:31:11 Yeah. That's another great Book of Mormon connection. Laman and Lemuel say this, Nephi says they didn't believe that Jerusalem, that great city could be destroyed. And there's other hints of this in the Bible too. There seems to be a sense among people that Jerusalem is invincible. That you can get attacked, you can go through hard times, but that God won't let it be

destroyed. Because his presence is there. The temple is there so that he will ultimately save it in the nick of time, at least. And you had a very dramatic example of that in Hezekiah's day. And that may be directly fueling this idea that Laman and Lemuel and likely many others had that, no, Jerusalem can't be destroyed. God would save it again.

- John Bytheway: 00:31:47 It was within their recent memory. Recent history anyway.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:31:51 Yeah, they don't understand. This is all based on how righteous you are in calling on the Lord for aid and trusting in him.
- Hank Smith: 00:31:56 It's not a safe zone. Who comes next?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:31:58 So then we get Josiah. And Josiah is one of the most important Kings in the history here. In fact, we talked about the Deuteronomistic history earlier, going from Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings. This stretch of books that tells kind of a complete story. And Josiah appears to be important in the story for a lot of reasons. And one hint that you get that he's extra important more than these other Kings is if you go in your scriptures back to 2 King's 13, you get a prophecy of him like years and years and years and years and years before he comes on the scene.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:32:33 So 1 King's 13 to kind of backtrack to a previous week here. You've got a first one, a man of God, a prophet, out of Judah by the word of the Lord goes unto Bethel. So you've got a prophet from the southern kingdom of Judah, goes up to the northern kingdom of Israel to Bethel, which is one of these two shrines that they had to worship Jehovah. But from the perspective of the south here, they're bad. So this prophet goes up to Bethel and he talks to Jeroboam. This is Jeroboam I. So he's the first king of the Northern kingdom. And he's the one that set up these worship sites at Dan and Bethel. So this prophet goes up there to talk to him.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:33:10 And in verse two, he talks not to Jeroboam, but actually I find this funny, he talks to the altar that Jeroboam built as if it were a person and can hear him. And he cries to the altar and gives a prophecy. "Oh, altar. Oh, altar, altar. Thus sayeth the Lord. Behold, a child shall be born under the house of David." So that's the Royal family of the other kingdom. "Josiah by name." So he's named here, not just generic prophecy. "And upon thee," meaning upon you the altar, "Shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee and men's bones shall be burned upon thee." So he gives this prophecy that in hundreds of years, there's going to be a king of the line of David

born, Josiah. Who's going to come here and all you bad priests that are now doing stuff on this altar. He's going to kill you here and burn your bones on the altar, thus desecrating the altar. And he's going to kind of destroy this site.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:34:04 So way back here, you get this foreshadowing that you, as a reader, the narrator's telling you watch out for this Josiah guy. He's going to be extra important. None of these other kings are ever prophesied about by name coming and doing something. Josiah is. So when we finally get to him in the narrative, we should be going, oh, that guy I've been waiting for this.
- Hank Smith: 00:34:22 I remember him being talked about earlier. Yeah.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:34:24 Yeah. And the other thing that seems to be important about him is I mentioned that the Deuteronomistic history seems to be written in stages. Just like in the Book of Mormon, Mormon writes an initial history and then Moroni comes along later and adds a bunch of stuff to it and kind of stretches it further and puts stuff at the beginning and all that.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:34:41 So similar thing going on here, a very popular common scholarly take on the formation of the Deuteronomistic history is that the initial draft was written during Josiah's reign perhaps by his administration or under his patronage. And that originally part of the point of it was to show the history of the country back from Moses and culminating with Josiah as the climax of the story. That they understand Josiah to be the best king they've ever had, they said that. And that he finally does everything right and now we're finally going to have this golden age where we're going to be great and that he's the climax. And he's the end of the story.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:35:18 The second addition of this later kind of then moves the story further and deals with how things didn't go as they had thought. But there's a lot of things in these books that make more sense if you understand them being written during Josiah's reign, rather than someone who knows about the exile and the destruction that's going to happen later. So that's how they're trying to tease apart these layers. All right? So that means this guy's really important. So let's look at his story here.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:35:46 So chapter 22 verse one, the guy is only eight years old when he starts to rein and that's because his dad got assassinated prematurely. I guess all assassinations are premature. He dies prematurely. So Josiah is eight years old when he's on the throne

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:36:01 and in verse 2 it points out, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, walked in all the way of David, his father." Again, that's language saying that he worships Jehovah, not idols, because David did have other problems, but that's the most important thing that the authors of Kings are focusing on. "And he turned not aside to the right hand or the left." That's Deuteronomic language. That's what Deuteronomy says to do. Don't turn aside to the right or to the left. We get Deuteronomy language peppering all this stuff again. Then we get the story here. It says that in the 18th year of his reign, or the 18th year of when he is around. Anyway, he decides to repair the temple because apparently it's fallen into disrepair under the stewardship of the previous kings.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:36:41 He has his servants take a bunch of money that they've got and go deliver it to these workers in verse 5, he says, "And let them give it to the doers of the work, which is in the house of the Lord to repair the breaches of the house." He wants to repair the temple and kind of restore it to its former glory. That immediately tells you where his thought is. If you're supporting the temple and temple work there, you're doing the right thing. That leads to this discovery. You've got this guy in verse 8, Hilkiah, the high priest, and he's in the temple, and he reports, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord." This thing is, it's the Sefer Ha-Torah, the book of the Torah, the book of the law. Later it's also called the Sefer Habrit, the book of the covenant. He finds some kind of book in the temple. Apparently, this is something that nobody had known about before this discovery. It's hidden in the temple somehow.

Hank Smith: 00:37:36 Under a floorboard or something they were?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:37:39 He finds this book and he brings it to Sheffon the scribe. Then that guy brings it to King Josiah and says, "Yeah, we found a book in the temple." And then they read it out loud to the king. In verse 11, it came to pass when King Josiah had heard the words of the book of the law that he rent his clothes. His response to hearing it is to tear his clothes, which is an expression of being upset, really sad. Apparently, based on what he talks about in the rest of the story, the reason is he hears this book and he realizes that they have not been doing the things that the book of the law says you're supposed to be doing. The book of the law talks about the punishments and consequences of not keeping these commandments. He realizes, oh no, we are in major trouble because we have not been doing what we should.

Hank Smith: 00:38:26 Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:38:27 He is upset.

Hank Smith: 00:38:29 How did this get lost? Is there any theory on this? Because it seems like Hezekiah knows the law. Right? Or are we saying this had been-

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:38:37 Yeah. We've had two Kings between us and Hezekiah so the assumption is maybe that either these wicked Kings that we've had for a while, because you got to understand Manasseh, despite being the worst guy, he has like the longest reign ever look at 21 verse 1, he reigns 55 years. More than half a century has passed between us and Hezekiah. It's a long time. This is one of those places I mentioned that Kings lets you see how it's not like bad guys always get punished right away and good guys always don't get blessed right away. Manasseh is an example of that. In Kings, he's the most wicked king and yet he has the longest, most peaceful reign of any of these guys, which doesn't seem fair. Right?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:39:18 In Chronicles, because the chronicler doesn't feel like that sends a good message. He adds a story not from Kings where Manasseh was bad and then he got captured and lived a life in jail for a while that humbled him and he repented, and then he got back to his throne. The jail times shows him getting punished and then repenting and being good for the rest of his life shows why his reign was so long. The chronicler kind of fixes all that for you. The point here is he reigned a long time. We have had more than half a century passed since Hezekiah was on the scene. There's different theories on what's going on with this book. Was the book hidden because the bad kings would've mistreated the book and so it had to be refound in the temple? Or was it simply locked away in a closet and no one cared to go look for it until we have ... No one read their scriptures.

John Bytheway: 00:40:00 Does the idea of oral tradition play into, it they remembered things orally?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:40:05 You figure that they know about some kind of laws because Josiah thinks he's doing what he should do but when he reads this book, he fears, oh wow, there's a lot more we weren't doing and that's what makes him panic here. Now, there is a scholarly theory that actually the book was not found by Josiah, that he actually wrote the thing and used it to justify the reforms he's going to make but that's not the scriptural presentation so I'll just stick with what it says in Second Kings right here. Just to throw that out that that's how some people read it.

Hank Smith: 00:40:30 He wanted to make a bunch of changes so he, "Hey look, we found this book."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:40:36 So, "Oh look, we found a book." That's the way some people see it, but that's not of course how the Second Kings is describing it. Now, what is this book? Some people have seen this as being the five books of Moses, that it's the whole Torah, the way we have it today. Other people propose that maybe what he has found is just Deuteronomy. The reason for that being, again, we've already seen that Deuteronomy is having a big influence on how this Second Kings is being written. More than that, when you look at what Josiah does in response to reading this book, what he does is straight out of Deuteronomy and the language used to describe how he does it is also language straight out of Deuteronomy. Much more so than the way things are described in Exodus, Leviticus, or Numbers. It's Deuteronomistic language. That's led to the suggestion that this book of the law is some kind of form of Deuteronomy, that's specifically what he's responding to. It's hard to say, but that's in the air there.

Hank Smith: 00:41:27 And he's going to do an extreme makeover here.

John Bytheway: 00:41:29 It's a good way to put it.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:41:30 Yeah. We call it the Josianic Reform.

John Bytheway: 00:41:33 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:41:34 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:41:34 Right? The first thing he wants to do is talk to a prophet to find out, is it too late or can we still fix this? The interesting thing is the prophet he goes to is not in fact a man, it is a woman named Huldah. In verse 14, Huldah the prophetess. The word prophetess in English there, the Hebrew is simply the feminine form of the word prophet. Prophet is a *nābî'* and the feminine form is *nēbî'â*. It's the female version of the word prophet right there. Interestingly, he goes to her and there's other prophetesses in the Old Testament. This isn't exceptional, but it is kind of rare. He goes to her and says, "Can you inquire of the Lord and see what's going to happen because we've been so bad?"

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:42:14 Then she sends a message back in verse 15, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel," so again a female prophet speaking in the name of the Lord, "tell the man that sent you to me," and then she

gives a prophecy. It goes all the way to the rest of the chapter. To summarize it, she says, "Judah still is going to go down eventually. However, because you Josiah have been righteous and you're trying to turn things around the destruction's not going to happen in your days. You'll have a peaceful reign. The problems are going to be delayed."

Hank Smith: 00:42:42 Verse 19, "Because thine heart was tender and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord." So she's saying because you've tried, there's going to be a delay en route here for Judah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:42:53 I like that, Hank, because it says, "You humbled yourself before the Lord when thou heardest what I spake." In the scriptures there. I like that idea that we might not be living life perfectly, but as we listen to and read the scriptures and we recognize the difference between what the scriptures are teaching and something in our own life, and we humble ourselves enough to conform to what the scriptures teach that the Lord recognizes that and says, "You know what? It doesn't matter what you did in the past. I am pleased that you're now making the change now that you know better."

Hank Smith: 00:43:23 That's awesome. This can be a great model for us. Study your scriptures. When you see something in your life that's not aligned with scripture, so let's make some correction.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:43:33 Then we can run through chapter 23 fairly quick but basically it's his reform. First, he goes out in verse 2 and he gathers all the people of Jerusalem together and says, "Okay, we're going to have a covenant renewal ceremony, everybody." It says he gathers all the people and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant, which he found in the house of the Lord. I don't know how long that took. Maybe a few hours. Then the king stood by a pillar and he made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord, to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and with all their soul and to perform the words of the covenant that were written in the book and all the people stood to the covenant. Everybody's kind of agreeing, okay, we're going to take it from the top. We're going to do this right from now on.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:44:16 By the way, the Come Follow Me manual. If you go onto this week's lesson online, it'll take you to a video the church made about Josiah and it films this whole scene and it's kind of moving. Right? It's a 12 minute video and you see all the people standing and making the covenant and they agree to get rid of the foreign gods and the idols and the sacrificing babies and the other stuff they're doing and all the bad stuff. Then the rest of

the chapter has Josiah going up and down throughout the territory where he's got influence and he breaks down the high places. He gets rid of the idols. He destroys the bad priests that are doing the bad things. It's sure to mention in particular that he goes to the place that was prophesied about in First Kings 13, he goes to Bethel and he kills the bad priest there and burns their bones on the altar like that prophecy had said.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:45:02 Then, it even alludes back to that earlier story, because as he's burning all this stuff, he notices a Sepulcher nearby. In verse 17 he says, "What's that over there?" The men tell him in Bethel, "Oh that's the Sepulcher of the man of God, which came from Judah and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel." Then unlike the other tombs, which he's kind of raiding and burning all the bones here, he says, "Okay, leave that guy alone. Sounds like he was a good guy."
- Hank Smith: 00:45:28 I like that guy.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:45:30 He prophesized about me. Then in verse 21, they have this big Passover feast. The king commands all the people saying keep the Passover as it is written in the book of the covenant. Now, remember in Deuteronomy like we mentioned, Passover is a big national celebration. Everyone should come to Jerusalem, do this together at the temple. That's what they do here. It mentions this was the best Passover we've ever had.
- John Bytheway: 00:45:50 That's so interesting to me that they hadn't done that. How many years did that say they hadn't done the Passover?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:45:56 It says they hadn't done it in verse 22 from the days of the judges that judged Israel nor in all the days of the Kings of Israel. Well it says not necessarily they hadn't had any Passover, it says they hadn't had such a Passover. Maybe it was like the best way they'd ever done.
- Hank Smith: 00:46:09 Oh, okay. Josiah really makes some huge changes that probably affected Lehi, correct, in his life?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:46:17 This would've been in Lehi's lifetime. Lehi would've been around during all the reforms. Josiah was his king.
- Hank Smith: 00:46:23 I don't think maybe as Latter-day saints we don't realize how important Josiah is to the stories we have.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:46:28 If I can bring out a little Spencer W. Kimball here, I've got the Teachings of the Presidents of the Church, Spencer W. Kimball

manual here. I thought this was interesting. President Kimball actually says the story of King Josiah in the Old Testament is a most profitable one to liken unto ourselves. To me, it is one of the finest stories in all the scriptures. Then he goes on to explain what he loves about this. Sometimes it seems we take the scriptures too much for granted because we do not fully appreciate how rare a thing it is to possess them and how blessed we are because we do have them. We seem to have settled so comfortably into our experiences in this world and become so accustomed to hearing the gospel taught among us that it is hard for us to imagine it could have ever been otherwise.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:47:14 Then, I love this thought he says here. I ask us all to honestly evaluate our performance in scripture study. It is a common thing to have a few passages of scripture at our disposal floating in our minds as it were, and thus to have the illusion that we know a great deal about the gospel. In this sense, having a little knowledge can be a problem indeed. I am convinced that each of us, at some time in our lives, must discover the scriptures for ourselves and not just discover them once, but rediscover them again and again.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:47:44 I love that analogy from the Josiah story, the rediscovery of the scriptures, how deeply it moved him, how earnest he was trying to keep the commandments as he found them in the scriptures and the profound impact it had on these people here. For us, I love President Kimball's invitation to have a similar experience. Access to scriptures is not our problem today. They're on our phones. They're on our shelves. Opening them up and actually reading them and feasting on the word of Christ, that's the real challenge. When we do, it can be like a re-discovery as we find that there's a feast waiting for us that maybe we haven't had in a while.

John Bytheway: 00:48:19 They actually made a movie years ago called How Rare a Possession. I think it comes from that President Kimball's statement. We don't understand how rare a thing it is to possess them. Yeah, I love what you said. Having scriptures is not the problem today. How many languages and right on our phone, you can in the morning just say, "Hey, read me this chapter." And your phone will do it. It's amazing.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:48:42 As an update to President Kimball, I loved 10 years ago, Elder Christofferson in conference gave a similar talk where he talked about William Tindale, the Bible translator who gave us the English Bible. Then he was killed for translating the Bible into English. Elder Christofferson made the point that in Tindale's

day, the problem was access to the scriptures. We have a very different problem. It's just people don't open up the books. Actually, my second son, so my first son's Josiah. My second son, his name is Micah after the biblical book, but his middle name is Tindale.

- John Bytheway: 00:49:14 Wow.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:49:14 Because I wanted him to always remember that, to treasure there was a time when we did not have access to the Bible and we can't take that for granted because just like Judah gets so off course when they're not reading the scriptures, in our personal lives it's easy to think I'm on course but if we're not in the scriptures every day, giving us that spiritual feast, it's easy by degrees to get off course.
- Hank Smith: 00:49:35 Josh, I wanted to name my twins Wycliffe and Tindale and I got vetoed by my wife.
- John Bytheway: 00:49:41 Got voted down?
- Hank Smith: 00:49:42 Yeah. I have that exact talk in front of me. We have two witnesses here, Josh, because I wanted to bring this up. Elder Christofferson says, this is April, 2010, the blessing of scripture. "In Tindale's day, scriptural ignorance abounded, because people lacked access to the Bible, especially in a language they could understand. Today, the Bible and other scripture are readily at hand, yet there is a growing scriptural illiteracy because people will not open the books." Then this statement I wanted to get for you all, "Consequently they have forgotten things their grandparents knew."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:50:18 Yeah, I think that's great Hank, because when my son was born we named the baby Josiah after this king. Then, I was surprised all the friends, family, ward members who ask, "Oh, what's the baby's name?" "Josiah." And they're like, "Who is that? Where'd you get that name?" No one had any idea who he was. I hope all the FollowHIM listeners and those following Come Follow Me in the schedule now learn about Josiah, know who he is, and will combat the scriptural illiteracy.
- John Bytheway: 00:50:42 There is on BYUTV On Demand a movie called That Promised Day. It's about putting together our LDS edition of the Bible. I'll tell you really grow an appreciation for being able to open our Bible and to see footnotes to the Book of Mormon and the Bible dictionary and JST additions in Hebrew. That has helped me a

lot to appreciate what we have. That Promised Day on BYUTV On Demand. It's really a good documentary.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:15 I agree, John. In fact, in my Bible classes at BYU, I will watch about 20 minutes of that documentary and show them because it's the day when I want to teach them how to use their LDS scriptures. Right, here are the footnotes. Here are the chapter headings. To me, rather than just telling them, oh, those are there and they're helpful. The documentary shows them no, there was a time when these didn't exist and we had to come up with these and that helps them appreciate what a blessing it is to have them.
- John Bytheway: 00:51:37 It's such a cool story. It was a completely new footnoting formatting system that hadn't been tried to have each verse have the A, B, C, D, start over again, and then to do the triple columns at the bottom. It's really fun to see how all of that developed and to know there's a lot of work that went behind what you see at the bottom of every page.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:58 I love that documentary in conjunction with the other one on BYUTV is Fires of Faith.
- John Bytheway: 00:52:02 Fires of Faith about the Bible.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:52:03 Which goes back in time to William Tindale and the other English translator. That gives you kind of the full history here of how many people have sacrificed to give us the Word of God so that we can read it today.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:11 Elder Christofferson in that same talk said, "Surely with this blessing, the Lord is telling us that our need for constant recourse to the scriptures is greater than in any previous time. May we feast continuously on the words of Christ that will tell us all things we should do. It's not just a blessing to have it, but it's also the blessing itself is a message from the Lord saying, you need to return to this over and over and over. Elder Christofferson says scriptures are revelation and they will bring added revelation.
- John Bytheway: 00:52:44 Why wouldn't you, if that power is available right there?
- Hank Smith: 00:52:48 Yeah, John, sometimes I think if I was the adversary, I couldn't get you to do something evil, but I could distract you to where you never spend time in scripture.

John Bytheway: 00:52:57 Yeah. Elder Richard G. Scott said, "Satan has a powerful tool to use against good people. It is distraction."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:53:04 Well, let's bring this story to a close now. 2 Kings 23-25 summarizes Josiah by saying, "And like him was there no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might according to all the law of Moses, neither after him arose there any like him." Now I mentioned before this theory that this history was written in stages. You get the Mormon stage and then the Moroni stage. There's one way that some scholars read this is that Second Kings 23-25 is the original ending.

Hank Smith: 00:53:36 Yeah. By the people who didn't know about Babylon coming.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:53:39 Yes. Remember that it's written during Josiah's lifetime and where everything is building towards him. You have the prophecy foreshadowing him and he's setting the model. This is how you should do it. We've done it wrong in the past, but now we've finally arrived and they end right here with this statement and then the history's done, but of course then history keeps going. Then the theory would be that you have a few decades pass and then you get a Moroni figure

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:54:04 who finishes some additional narrative and maybe goes back and adds some stuff earlier. And one of the things that happens, if that's how it happened after the first edition of this, is that Josiah's reign comes to an unexpectedly horrific end. In verse 29, it talks about the Pharaoh, King of Egypt, is coming up and he's traveling through Josiah's territory to go up to Assyria and Josiah rides out there to stop him from going through Judah. And it says that the Pharaoh slew him at Megiddo when he had seen him and the servants carried Josiah in a chariot, dead from Megiddo and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him. And after all the buildup, all the prophecies, all the chapters on Josiah, that's like, "Whoa." That took a turn.

Hank Smith: 00:54:49 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:54:50 And it's interesting, there's no explanation here to why did God let Josiah die. After all that he did nothing wrong. And so possibly if this was written not that long after Josiah's reign, somebody feels like they need to update the story and finish it, but they still have not had time to process this and figure it out. So they don't even bother to try to explain this. It's just a tragedy. They describe it matter-of-factly, and then they move on because they don't know what to do with this. Interestingly enough Chronicles, since it's written much later, it's had more

time to think about this, it actually adds an explanation. It suggests that maybe the Pharaoh going up through the country, that God wanted Pharaoh to go where he was going. And Josiah made the mistake of interfering with God's plans. And that's where he went wrong, made a mistake there. But so that's Chronicles trying to figure it out later. But the King's version here, the earlier one, it's just like, "Yeah, moving on."

- Hank Smith: 00:55:38 We don't know how to deal with it.
- John Bytheway: 00:55:39 They were not particularly allies at this point with Egypt or anything.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:55:45 The problem seems to be that Josiah tried to stop the Pharaoh and that's where he got in trouble. There's a bigger political picture going on, but it's not important for the narrative so they don't give us the details.
- John Bytheway: 00:55:54 Boy.
- Hank Smith: 00:55:55 Josh, I was going to say, it's so interesting that the initial ending could have been 2 Kings 23:25. Because that seems like a beautiful ending. Cut, credits, let's move on. It's almost like you said with Moroni, how many times does Moroni finish the book of Mormon and then says, "Well, I haven't died, so I guess we're going to have to continue the story."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:56:15 Yeah. And Moroni at first doesn't think he's going to write that much. So rather than start a new book, he just tacks on stuff and keeps the Book of Mormon going a couple more chapters. If someone came after this and would decide, "Okay, I'll just add a little bit to the end of 2 Kings here and bring it to my point of time," that's what Moroni did.
- Hank Smith: 00:56:31 How do they explain the fall of Judah?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:56:34 After Josiah dies, his son Jehoahaz is made the king, but he doesn't last very long because the Pharaoh comes back and gets rid of that guy and puts his brother Jehoiakim on the throne. Because he apparently agreed to work with the Pharaoh and the Pharaoh thinks he can call the shots now. And then it's the beginning of the end, because Jehoiakim, he ends up having to be a vassel to the new Eastern superpower, which is Babylon at this point. Babylon's conquered the Assyrians and now they're doing the exact same thing, "Pay us taxes or we'll come destroy you."

Hank Smith: 00:57:05 Babylon once was a vessel of Assyria, rebelled and took down Assyria.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:57:12 Now they're doing the same stuff that Assyria had been doing. But then in verse 24:1 in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, Jehoiakim became his servant three years. So that means he's the vassal. And then he turned and rebelled against him and we know how these kind of stories end. So then Nebuchadnezzar is upset that he broke the treaty. So he starts marching on Jerusalem and it appears that as he's coming to invade, Jehoiakim dies and his son, Jehoiachin takes over and becomes the new king. And then Nebuchadnezzar takes that guy and exiles him to Babylon, Jehoiachin. So this is verse eight now of 24. In verse 24:11 Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, came against the city and his servants did besiege it, but he's not going to completely destroy the city yet.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:57:59 The king that's on the throne now didn't rebel against him, that was his dad. So he is like, "Well maybe I can still work with your family here if you promise to behave in the future." So he exiles Jehoiachin to Babylon and he picks his uncle, Jehoiakim's brother, and makes him the king and makes him promise that he'll keep up the VA status there. So look at 24:15, he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon and all his family. And then look at verse 17, and the King of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king and his stead and changed his name to Zedekiah. And that should make your Book of Mormon bells ring. Oh this, the first year of the reign of Zedekiah King of Judah. That's when Lehi starts prophesying, so we're right there.

Hank Smith: 00:58:42 1 Nephi 1:4.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:58:45 Yep. And Lehi's prophesying, you guys are wicked. You need to repent or Jerusalem will be destroyed and the inhabitants carried away, captive into Babylon. So then back in second King's 24, look at verse 20. It says that Zedekiah rebelled against the King of Babylon. So he also broke the vassal status and this time Nebuchadnezzar's like, "Look, I've had it with you guys. You keep rebelling. I gave you a chance before. So this time you're toast, I'm going to level your city." And in chapter 25 is now the last chapter, that's exactly what he does. In verse six, he took the king, so that's Zedekiah, and then in verse seven, he slew all the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Again, killed the royal family, that standard procedure. Now we know from the Book of Mormon that one of Zedekiah's sons escaped, that's Mulek.

Hank Smith: 00:59:29 Helaman 8:21. Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:59:32 I'm sure that's a fantastic story. But Kings doesn't know about that, the kid that got away.

Hank Smith: 00:59:37 Right.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:59:37 Right there, it just says all of them were killed. And then he gouges out Zedekiah's eyes to blind him. So the literal last thing he ever sees is his kids getting killed. Wow. The ancient world. And then he carries Zedekiah as a prisoner to Babylon where he's going to die without posterity. And then in verse nine, Nebuchadnezzar burns the house of the Lord. So the temple is destroyed and he burns the King's house, that's the palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. He burns everything. And in verse 10, he breaks down the walls of Jerusalem. So Jerusalem now is completely leveled. And then in verse 11, he's going to carry away a bunch of the people that are left. In verse 12, he leaves a few there, but he exiles a whole bunch of people over to Babylon where they're going to be in captivity. And in verse 21 summarizes it, so Judah was carried away out of their land. So this is the start of the Babylonian captivity.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:00:29 It's brutal stuff. Okay. But the way the book ends is really interesting. So go to verse 27. Now, do you remember though, Zedekiah is carried away with all his kids killed, so he's not going to have any more kids, but there was one other king that was exiled to Babylon, right? Jehoiachin. So he is the guy, he was Josiah's grandson. So remember he was exiled and then we didn't hear about him. He's just exiled. He's taken to captivity. But verse 27 has this little coda at the end of the book that picks up that guy's story. Verse 27, it came to pass in the seven and 30th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin, King of Judah in the 12th month and the seventh and 20th day of the month. There's a new king of Babylon who did lift up the head of Jehoiachin King of Judah out of prison. And he spoke kindly to him.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:01:19 And in verse 29, he changed his prison garments and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. And then it even in verse 30 ends by talking about his daily food ration. To understand why this is the ending. You got to step back and see all sorts of big pictures here. So Jehoiachin himself is going to die in captivity. He's treated better. He's not in prison, but he's going to die over there. But what this little coda tells us is that whoever is the Moroni writing at the end of it all and adding the updates at the end here, he knows that Jehoiachin is still there in Babylon and he's alive and has a pretty good life, which means presumably he could get married and have children. Which means ...

Hank Smith: 01:02:00 Royal line.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:01 The Davidic heir is still out there somewhere. There's a descendant of David still out there. And it's this little ray of hope that maybe just maybe this story is not over yet. God promised David that his posterity would never die out. That one of his descendants would rule over the throne of Israel forever. The country was destroyed, the temples destroyed, the palace is destroyed. The walls are leveled. There's no more country, but God's promise to David can still come to fruition because that heir is still out there somewhere. And so it ends with this little ray of hope that maybe not all is lost.

Hank Smith: 01:02:37 Josh, you said that you watched Marvel with your kids. Doesn't that look like a little bit of a after the credits scene?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:45 Post credit scene. Yeah. That's a good way to look at it.

Hank Smith: 01:02:48 That there's still, something's going to come. Something's going to happen. This Davidic line is still ...

John Bytheway: 01:02:53 We're going to set you up for the next movie.

Hank Smith: 01:02:54 Yeah. I'm going to write that down.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:57 Yeah. And in Chronicles again, since Chronicles is written later than our last version of this, Chronicles pushes the story even further. It actually describes everybody coming back from exile and they rebuild. So Chronicles covers that, but this one ends here. So this is apparently as far as the final editor knew, but he knows enough to know maybe not all hope is lost because that is out there. And I love that little ray of hope at the end, after what was a pretty bleak couple chapters, because it shows again that God's got a long game. He's not making promises to these people and then everything is going to be ruined.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:03:28 In fact, even though they're wicked and they have some major setbacks and all sorts of destruction and calamity, they can't ultimately thwart God's plans. He's always going to find a way to still use Israel to accomplish his purposes. No matter how bad they blow it along the way. He's playing a long game, he's got these plans in place. I think the theological idea at the end here is that God is still in charge and he's moving the chessboard in ways that we can't comprehend and with the sight that goes beyond what we can see, but he's going to make everything turn out the way it's supposed to be.

Hank Smith:	01:03:56	That's awesome. Holy cow, John, this has been fantastic.
John Bytheway:	01:04:01	Great day.
Hank Smith:	01:04:02	Oh my goodness.
John Bytheway:	01:04:03	Josh. You're such a good teacher. Just the way you describe things is just superb. Honestly, superb. And I know good teaching.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:04:12	Thanks.
John Bytheway:	01:04:12	I watch a lot of teachers. I'm just sitting here like, "I don't want it to end."
Hank Smith:	01:04:18	Josh, this has been amazing. Amazing. And I'm sure everyone listening agrees. This has just been a spiritual scriptural feast where you've taught us the story, but also shown us incredible principles. We would encourage everyone by the way, I should have mentioned this earlier, that we did an episode with you on the Book of Genesis. Do you remember that John? That was such a great day. So any of you who haven't heard that go back. Not only will you learn a lot about the Book of Genesis, but you'll hear Josh and his testimony at the end of that episode. Josh, to wrap up this week, what should we take away from everything we've studied here in 2 Kings? What's your major takeaway? What do you hope our listeners get from this?
Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:04:59	I guess we've been studying a national history, Israel and Judah and seeing how God accomplishes his purposes with these big groups of people across many centuries. Take these lessons and make it a little more personal for a second. It's just been on my mind a lot recently what difficult times a lot of people go through. We've talked about having crises of faith and deciding who we trust and everything and this episode. And I just want to bear my testimony that we can trust our Father in Heaven and our Savior, Jesus Christ. I have friends and family I talk to where it looks like promises will never be fulfilled, patriarchal blessings are never going to come to pass and happiness that people look for won't ever pan out. I really believe that Heavenly Father, as with Israel and Judah sees our lives in a long game and he knows what he's doing and we can trust him.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:05:55	One of my most favorite quotes from the prophet Joseph Smith comes, as he talks about this confidence we can have that God will fulfill every promise made to us. Joseph Smith taught those who have died in Jesus Christ may expect to enter into all that

fruition of joy when they come forth, which they possessed or anticipated here. Again, those who have died in Jesus Christ can expect to enter into all of that fruition of joy when they come forth, which they possessed or anticipated here. And Joseph continues by saying, "I'm glad I have the privilege of communicating to you some things which if grasped closely will be a help to you. When earthquakes bellow, the clouds gather the lightnings flash and the storms are ready to burst upon you like peels of thunder, lay hold of these things and let not your knees or joints tremble nor your hearts faint for what can earthquakes, wars or tornadoes do? Nothing."

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:07:00 " All your losses will be made up to you in the resurrection provided you continue faithful. By the vision of the almighty, I have seen it." And I just hear the power there. In Joseph's words, that man knew loss and he knew suffering, but he saw and knew perfectly that every promised blessing can be ours, whether in this life or the next. So if you're going through one of those times right now, please do not give up. Trust that Heavenly Father will help you. We have the testimony of the prophets and the witness of people like in the Bible there who went before us, that God will not abandon us or forsake us. We'll have these Hezekiah last minute miracles come into our lives and it might come later, it might come sooner. But Heavenly Father is someone we can trust. We can have confidence in our trust in him because he will never break trust with us. So I just want to share that testimony in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.
- John Bytheway: 01:08:05 Amen.
- Hank Smith: 01:08:06 Amen. Well, John Bytheway, how did we get this job?
- John Bytheway: 01:08:11 This is just great. I've always loved these stories. I love them more. Thank you, Josh. You've helped me and strengthened me today. Thank you.
- Hank Smith: 01:08:18 Yeah, me too. Isaiah said be not afraid. We want to thank Dr. Josh Sears for being with us today. And this isn't the last time we've seen him. We'll have him back. We want to thank our executive producers, Steve and Shannon Sorensen and our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. And we hope all of you will join us next week. We have another episode coming of followHIM.

HOW CAN I STAY FAITHFUL WHEN
THOSE AROUND ME ARE NOT?



- Hank Smith: 00:05 Hello, my friends. Welcome to followHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith. I'm here with one of my best friends in the whole wide world. His name is John Bytheway. Hi, John.
- John Bytheway: 00:13 Hi, Hank. Thanks. I like that introduction.
- Hank Smith: 00:16 Yes. One of my best friends in the whole wide world. Now, John, we are doing followHIM Favorites. We take one question from this week's lesson, which is the end of 2 Kings, 17 through 25. And the question this week is how do you remain faithful when those around you aren't remaining faithful? And here's why I was looking at the last nine kings of the Southern kingdom of Judah. I'm sure you do this all the time, John. You're like, "Let me look at those kings."
- John Bytheway: 00:44 I was just making that list yesterday.
- Hank Smith: 00:46 Yeah. I was just like jotting them down. And you go from it's 150 years worth of kings, nine of them, Ahab all the way down to Zedekiah. And there's only two of the nine who are close to God. So you could say that the majority is not faithful to God, yet here are these two. Hezekiah and Josiah who stand out as, "Nope, I'm faithful to God." John, how do you be a Hezekiah or a Josiah in a world of Ahabs, Manassehs, Jehoiachins, Zedekiahs, Amnons who are not faithful to God? How do you stay faithful when those around you aren't?
- John Bytheway: 01:23 I wish we could open this up to listeners because there are a bunch of listeners out there who are doing exactly that. You're amazing. The fact that you're even listening to this tells us that you are doing what he Hezekiah did. I'm looking like in 2 King's 18 where it talks about Hezekiah. "20 and five years old was he, when he began to reign." He was a young adult, right? Verse three, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." Verse five, "He trusted the Lord God of Israel." And I see that in there. Do you trust God?

John Bytheway: 01:59 The promises he has made are so amazing. Do you trust him? Have you looked around you and seen? Sometimes it's kind of obvious sometimes when you look around, the consequences of not following God. Sometimes though it looks like they're having a blast. But eventually, that catches up to everybody. It has to.

John Bytheway: 02:19 Hank, you've heard me talk about this guy in my ward that is a missionary at the prison. And he stood up in the back of High Priest once. And he said, "Listen, you guys, I have to tell you when I was partying and drinking, I had a great time." He said, "I was at the great and spacious building, laughing at you guys. Then it turned on me and I lost my marriage and I lost the chance to raise my daughters. And I lost my job. And in 25 years, I spent \$500,000 on drugs and alcohol." And I'm like, "What? Who is this guy?" I've been to the prison with him since that to teach there, which is a wonderful experience. But anyway, he talked about, "First, it was fun and I lost everything." And I think of those who are listening that have this question.

John Bytheway: 03:01 I just want to say, hang in there and keep trusting God. It reminds me of Peter walking on the water. There are a lot of things he could have looked at. He could have looked at the waves. He could have looked at the wind. He could've looked at the clouds. When he focused on Christ, he was okay. And that's what Elder Holland said. As soon as his eyes wandered, then he started to sink. And so, man, we just want to tell you, Hank and I, your friends here, to hang in there and keep trusting God like Hezekiah did. Do that which is right in the sight of God and trust him and all of that. Those good consequences will follow.

Hank Smith: 03:37 John, everyone's going to have these Rabshakehs in their life who are attacking them. Remember that Rabshakeh. He knew exactly what to say to get you to doubt. He says, "Don't be deceived." That's chapter 19, verse 10, "Don't let this God whom you think is there deceive you." Very much like a Book of Mormon antagonist, trying to just push those right buttons. But look what in 2 Kings 19:15 Hezekiah prayed. He went to the Lord. He didn't go to Google. He didn't go to anybody else. He said, "Let me pray."

Hank Smith: 04:13 Look at verse 19. "I beseech thee," he says to God, "save us out of this hand." So one, I would say, if you're going to stay faithful, you have got to pray. That's part of trusting the Lord is praying heartfelt. And if you're like, "Well, Hank, I don't know how to pray. Hank, John, I don't know how to pray." Well, do what Joseph Smith said. He said, "I knelt down and began to offer up

the desires of my heart to God." That's to me a great definition of kneel down and to offer up the desires of your heart.

- John Bytheway: 04:43 And if you don't know how to pray, say that.
- Hank Smith: 04:46 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 04:47 Heavenly Father, I don't know how to pray. I just feel like we can get a checklist mentality. I said my prayers, but that's not the point. That when you get down on your knees and sincerely talk, you are just opening up the door to Heavenly Father, to help you inspire you send the Holy Ghost. And that's why you get down on your knees. Because you're putting yourself in a place where you can hear him, to use President Nelson's phrase that he has emphasized. So yeah, I love that.
- Hank Smith: 05:15 Exactly. So in Hezekiah's life, he did two things. He listened to the Prophet first. If Isaiah said it, he was in. Two, he went to the Lord. He prayed, but what did Josiah do? He was the other one we talked about. What did Josiah do that was different than what he Hezekiah did? And that is, he went to the scriptures. Believe it or not, he apparently had not heard the scriptures before someone found a set.
- John Bytheway: 05:42 "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord. What's that? 2 Kings 22:8. "Look what I found."
- Hank Smith: 05:50 So he says, "Read it to me, read it to me." So those of you listening, tell your parents, "Read this to me, read these books to me." It says that he did everything he could to follow what those scriptures said.
- Hank Smith: 06:03 Look at this in verse three, 2 Kings chapter 23, verse three. "And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul to perform the words of this covenant that were written in the book."
- Hank Smith: 06:22 So, John, I think if I was going to sum this up, I'd say, if you want to be a Hezekiah or a Josiah in a world full of wicked kings, you've got to do these three things. Put the Prophet's words first. Two, you've got to pray. And three, you've got to get into those scriptures and commit yourself.
- John Bytheway: 06:41 Yeah. And I don't think you look around with disdain on others. You just move forward with quiet confidence. And I don't know

what you think about the church, I love this. I love this. I get so much help. I get so much strength. I listen to conference and I am built up and I am strengthened and I am excited and motivated. And let that give you that kind of quiet confidence. You don't have to be condemning or judging who everybody else is. But for you, it's like I'm sticking with ... I am staying because I love this. It helps me, it blesses me. And I think the Lord wants to give you that kind of strength as we have just read.

Hank Smith: 07:20 Yeah. And don't be afraid to do a little makeover on your life. That's what Josiah does. When he reads scripture and he then looks at what's happening in his kingdom, he said, "All right, one of these two has got to change." Either the scriptures have to change or this situation has to change. So I know the scriptures aren't changing. So it says, he basically does an extreme Israel makeover. He builds the temple back up. He burns down the groves. He breaks down some of the evil things that were happening. So get rid of that music, get rid of those websites, get rid of those apps, whatever it is. Let's do an extreme life makeover and get back aligned. Let's get back aligned with God and the scriptures.

John Bytheway: 08:04 There was a talk, Hank, that affected me years ago, and I loved it because it was Elder Robert D. Hales, talking about that he was a fighter pilot in Vietnam. And his motto for their squadron was "Return with honor." And I believe it was in that talk where he gave the best definition of a friend that I've ever heard. A friend is one who makes it easier to live the gospel. And what you just said about eliminating this, that. Ask yourself, is this music a friend, is this TV show a friend? Is this movie a friend? Is this habit a friend? Is this way I spend my time a friend? Is it making it easier to live the gospel? Or is it making it harder? Why would I want to make it harder for me to live the gospel? Good way to think of things in your life as friends, not just people.

Hank Smith: 08:47 I love it. We'll finish here with 2 Kings 22:19. "Let your heart be tender. Soften your heart. Humble yourself before the Lord." You too. You're going to be Hezekiah and a Josiah in a world full of wickedness. You're going to be just like them. And I love what it says about Josiah in 2 Kings 23:25. "Like unto him, there was no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his might. Neither after him arose any like him."

Hank Smith: 09:20 We hope and pray that'll be said about you, that nobody looks to God like you do.

John Bytheway:	09:25	You just be the best version of you. Get your patriarchal blessing out. What am I supposed to do and be.
Hank Smith:	09:31	Get yourself aligned with him and he'll make your dreams come true.
Hank Smith:	09:36	Hey, come join us over on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. Use whatever app or whatever web browser you use, type in followHIM, Hank Smith, John Bytheway, it'll come right up. We're with Dr. Josh Sears this week. You are going to want to hear this one. It is fantastic. And join us next week because we're going to come at you with another followHIM Favorite.