



“God is My Salvation”

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:

What are the tools to understanding Isaiah? Dr. Jason Combs examines how Latter-day readers can better understand the words of Isaiah and find inspiration for today, as well as understanding the context, geography, and warnings issued to ancient Israel.

Part 2:

Dr. Jason Combs returns to examine how Isaiah’s prophecies apply to ancient Israel and our day and provide information regarding the scattering and gathering of Israel.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:00 Part 1–Dr. Jason Combs
- 01:08 Introduction of Dr. Jason Combs
- 05:55 How to start Isaiah
- 08:24 Legends regarding Isaiah’s death
- 10:16 Isaiah is the prophet of the Scattering and Gathering
- 12:13 Three divisions of Isaiah
- 15:42 Chapters 1-12 can also be broken into three parts
- 16:50 Tools for studying Isaiah–The Spirit
- 20:26 The use of poetic repetition
- 24:43 Slow down when studying
- 25:27 Understanding the Jews and the regions nearby
- 28:37 Prophecy in the present or future
- 35:15 Likening as a tool
- 42:45 Covenants, Christ, Current Events, Coming Events
- 49:49 Messages that resonate throughout time
- 52:14 Isaiah’s call
- 1:00:10 Isaiah and the sacrament
- 1:02:47 How long until the Scattering?
- 1:08:50 The gospel is transformational
- 1:14:14 Isaiah isn’t a continuous story
- 1:16:03 End of Part I–Dr. Jason Combs

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II– Dr. Jason Combs
- 00:07 Historical background to Isaiah 7
- 03:40 Justin Martyr writing about Isaiah in 155 A.D.
- 05:49 Review of the time of Isaiah
- 18:55 Isaiah 7 reveals biographical information about Isaiah
- 21:34 The Lord gives Isaiah a sign and a warning
- 25:02 The prophet delivers a message so present and future generations can learn
- 25:39 Discussion about Immanuel
- 34:47 Matthew’s discussion, fulfillment, and types
- 37:05 Another example of Matthew’s interpretation of Isaiah and Christ
- 40:19 Matthew’s interpretation of Jesus and the Davidic line of kingship
- 47:45 Handel, Tertullian, and Marcian
- 50:42 *Isaiah for Airheads* by John Bytheway
- 51:44 Matthew and Immanuel

- 54:36 Isaiah 9-11
- 58:08 Isaiah 12 is a conclusion to the prophecy
- 1:00:28 President Russell M. Nelson: “Let God Prevail”
- 1:04:07 “Lord, how long?”
- 1:06:42 Dr. Jason Combs shares his journey as a Bible scholar and Latter-day Saint
- 1:13:52 End of Part II–Dr. Jason Combs

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Biographical Information:



Jason Robert Combs is an assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. He joined the BYU faculty in 2016 after working as a lecturer at High Point University, Guilford College, and UNC-Greensboro in North Carolina. Combs earned his bachelor's degree in Near Eastern studies from BYU. He holds master's degrees in biblical studies from Yale Divinity School and in classics from Columbia University. He earned his PhD in religious studies with an emphasis on the history of early Christianity from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Courses Taught: New Testament, Hebrew Bible / Old Testament, Book of Mormon, Birth of Christianity, World Religions

Areas of Expertise: New Testament, Second Temple Judaism, History of Christianity (1st–3rd centuries CE), New Testament Apocrypha

Areas of Research: Cultural history of early Christianity, religious experience, dreams/visions.

Languages: Classical Greek (reading), Latin (reading), Biblical Hebrew (reading), Syriac (reading), German (reading and beginning conversational), French (reading), Italian (reading), Spanish (conversational and reading)

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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:	00:00:11	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. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my co-host John Bytheway, who I will describe as one who refuses evil and chooses good. John, you refuse evil and choose good. When I read Isaiah seven, I thought of you. You refuse evil and choose good. And one of the things you chose good was to be a co-host on this podcast.
John Bytheway:	00:00:43	Thanks. That was a great invitation. I appreciated it.
Hank Smith:	00:00:46	Yes. Please keep doing that, John, keep doing that.
John Bytheway:	00:00:49	So I chose the good, I didn't refuse the invitation.
Hank Smith:	00:00:52	Hey, speaking of choosing the good, we are starting a brand new section, five weeks of Isaiah coming up. And we chose not just a good Bible scholar, we chose a great Bible scholar to join us. John, tell everyone who's with us.
John Bytheway:	00:01:08	We're delighted to have Dr. Jason Combs with us today. He's an assistant professor of ancient scripture at BYU. He joined the BYU faculty in 2016 after working as a lecturer at High Point University, Guilford College and University of North Carolina Greensboro in North Carolina, UNC Greensboro. He earned his

bachelor's degree in Near Eastern Studies from BYU, has a master's degree in biblical studies from Yale Divinity School, and in classics from Columbia University. He earned his PhD in religious studies with an emphasis on the history of early Christianity from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:01:51 Thanks. I'm super excited to be here. I was really grateful when Hank reached out to me, and grateful that he let me talk a little about the one part of the Old Testament I know something about. I really specialize in New Testament and the period after that, but I've written a little bit on Isaiah six and a little bit on part of Isaiah seven. So really excited to talk about that today.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:13 Jason is one of the kindest people you will ever meet. He and I have been friends for years now. We got hired at BYU around the same time. And you think someone this smart shouldn't be this humble and kind, but he is. He's everything you'd hope him to be.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:02:32 I appreciate that.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:33 Jason, I know there's a book coming out this fall with your name on it out of the Maxwell Institute. Tell us a little bit more about that. I know you've been working on it for a while.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:02:42 Yeah. Not only my name, I'm co-editing this book with Mark Ellison who's also an ancient scripture as well as with two colleagues over at the Maxwell Institute, Kristian Heal and Catherine Taylor. It's going to be a beautiful book, both Mark Ellison and Catherine Taylor specialize in early Christian art. And we have incorporated so much of that rich artistic history of early Christians into this book.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:03:07 We are covering all sorts of topics that would be of interest to Latter-day Saints. The history of the Canon, how we got the New Testament. We're talking about church organization, how the church developed into a hierarchy with bishops and elders and deacons and all of that. We're talking about rituals and worship, and how that evolved over time and developed beautiful, rich traditions. I have a chapter in it on the nature of God, on the Trinity, something that I think we often misunderstand as Latter-day Saints. And because of that, we often enter into disagreements with other Christians that we don't have to have. We agree on a lot of things.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:03:52 Oftentimes when we Latter-day Saints talk about the history of Christianity after the New Testament, we tend to approach it

from the perspective of the apostasy. So we look at it looking for problems. We look at it looking for differences from the church today.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:04:08 In this book, we're taking a different approach in this book. We're turning our hearts to our ancient Christian fathers and mothers, and asking what can we learn from them? And I think they have a lot of beautiful, rich insights to offer us to help us appreciate our own beliefs today and all that we've inherited from ancient Christians.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:31 I think we have a tendency, Jason, if it's post New Testament, but before Joseph Smith, we maybe just have a tendency to look over it like, "Oh! We don't need that. That's during the apostasy." But I've heard you talk about a principle called holy envy. What is that?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:04:44 That term actually comes from Krister Stendahl, an ordained minister, also a famous New Testament scholar, who taught at Harvard University for years. But then when the church was trying to build a temple and there was a lot of protests, he actually intervened in order to help our church build a temple. And part of his intervention was using this principle that he called holy envy, where he said, I can look at another religion, one that is not my own, and find things in it that I wish were in my own religious tradition, things that I am envious of, but in a holy way. So he called it holy envy.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:05:27 I think it's a beautiful principle, and one that we should value as well as Latter-day Saints. I think we can look at the beliefs of others and the practices and teachings of others and find things that we can have some holy envy for. It's titled Ancient Christians: An Introduction for Latter-day Saints. It should be out by the end of the year, and it should be up on BYU's Maxwell Institute pretty soon, on their publication page.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:55 That's exciting. Jason, John, this is the beginning of five weeks covering the book of Isaiah. So before we jump in, Jason, what would you tell our listeners on how they approach the next five weeks? I know some are going to be tempted to just, "I can't do this. I'm going to skip it." But don't do that. Don't do that. How would you start?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:06:16 Yeah. Well, that's what you do when you read the Book of Mormon. You skip over the Isaiah chapters. Now you're actually required to read them. It's part of our Come Follow Me lessons. So let's just start a little with what we know about Isaiah. And the truth is we don't know much. We have his writings, but the

writings don't give us a whole lot about who this man Isaiah was.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:06:38 They give us a little bit, we can sort of pin down a date of when he lived. At the beginning of Isaiah six, he tells us that he has this amazing vision of God. And he says that this is in the year that King Uzziah died. And so we know that's right around 740 BC. In the very first verse of Isaiah, we have maybe some editor or something introduce the book in this first paragraph where it just summarizes everything we're about to read as the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:07:23 And so we know he continues preaching up to the time of King Hezekiah. King Hezekiah, his reign ends shortly after the siege of Jerusalem. So the Assyrian King Sennacherib will come down and lay siege to Jerusalem. I'm sure you've already covered this a little bit in Second Kings. So that's right around 701 BC.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:07:46 And so he continues to reign a couple years after that. And then Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, takes over from there. We can roughly estimate that Isaiah is preaching from 740 to about 701, but we don't know how long he lived before then or how long he lived after. We get a couple of other hints about Isaiah's life. We know that he has children. He takes one of them along to deliver a message at the beginning of Isaiah seven. And another one is mentioned in Isaiah eight. So we know he is married. He has children.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:08:24 There's a legend about his death. There's a legend that he is killed, that he dies as a martyr, under King Manasseh. That legend might be hinted at in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament. Hebrews chapter 11 is a list of all these different heroes of the Old Testament who exemplify living a life of faith. And it mentions that some were sawed in two. And that might be a reference to Isaiah because we know from a later tradition, both in Christianity and in Judaism, that there's a tradition that Isaiah was killed under king Manasseh, and that he was sawed in half. Sounds like a horrible way to die. So I hope that legend is false.
- Hank Smith: 00:09:07 Hebrews 11. I'm looking for that verse. What is that? I want to know that.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:09:11 It's Hebrews chapter 11, verse 37, is the one that mentions-

Hank Smith: 00:09:16 Sawn asunder, there it is.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:09:18 Sawn asunder.

Hank Smith: 00:09:20 I've said that to my students before that sometimes in Christian art, Isaiah will be seen holding a saw. That goes with that tradition.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:09:27 There's a Christian apocrypha text called the Ascension of Isaiah, definitely written by Christians, maybe second century or later, that sort of reimagines some of Isaiah's prophecies as being even more direct about who Jesus Christ was, and what Jesus Christ did in his lifetime. And then it ends, he has that all sealed up, and then it ends with this story of him being sawn asunder, cut in half with a saw.

John Bytheway: 00:09:57 Placed inside of a hollow log first or something like that.

Hank Smith: 00:10:02 Not the peaceful death that anybody's hoping for. Jason, tell me this, so 740 to 700 BC. That's a pretty exciting time for the history of Israel. There's a lot happening in that 40 year chunk.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:10:16 Right in the middle of that 722 is when Assyria comes and captures the Northern Kingdom of Israel, carries them away captive, and those become the lost 10 tribes of Israel. So Isaiah is the prophet of the scattering and gathering of Israel.

Hank Smith: 00:10:33 I like that.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:10:33 He witnesses the scattering and most of his prophecies throughout the book are about the future gathering of Israel. So he is an incredibly important prophet for that reason. So it really shouldn't surprise us that the Book of Mormon encourages us to read Isaiah, that modern day prophets have encouraged us to read Isaiah, given that the gathering of Israel is such an important part of the restoration of the church.

Hank Smith: 00:10:59 Wow! I love that. The prophet of the scattering and gathering of Israel. He lives to see the scattering, and he prophesies of the future gathering. No wonder Nephi loves him so much because Nephi is living that scattering.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:11:15 And it's important to realize that people can be scattered for different reasons. Nephi is part of a righteous kind of scattering. God scattered Lehi's family in order to preserve that righteous line at the time when Babylon was about to invade and take the Southern Kingdom of Judah captive. So scattering can happen

for a variety of reasons. And according to Isaiah, always part of God's plan.

- Hank Smith: 00:11:42 This is fascinating. He is living during a time of dramatic change in Israel. And he sees it coming, and then sees what's going to happen after all this scattering. I should bring this up, John Bytheway, you wrote Isaiah for Airheads.
- John Bytheway: 00:11:58 I did. It's just the Book of Mormon chapters.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:02 John, I always say that people can buy our books at DI. We have our own shelf right next to each other.
- John Bytheway: 00:12:07 That's where I get them.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:12:08 That's nice.
- John Bytheway: 00:12:09 And then I take the tags off and give them out as gifts.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:13 Let's keep going. Give us an overview of Isaiah. How should we approach this 60-what, 66 chapters.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:12:20 Very long book. It can be broken down roughly into three parts. The chapters one through 35 are Isaiah's woes to Judah primarily, though he does have some warnings to other nations in there as well. But woes to Judah, they faced the looming threat of Assyria, who is already on the border of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, ready to invade. As we just mentioned 722, they do.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:12:48 Then 36 through 39 is a narrative. It breaks from Isaiah's prophecies, I'll say more about the nature of Isaiah's prophecies in just a minute, and we get this narrative about the threat of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib. We learn a little about the Judahite king, Hezekiah, as he's being guided by Isaiah to deal with the threat of Sennacherib. Then those sections end with the warning about future Babylonian exile.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:15 If this sounds familiar, we've already covered this story in Second Kings. So if everybody's going, "Hey, wait. I thought we already covered this." We did with Dr. Josh Sears. We looked at the story of Hezekiah and Isaiah.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:13:28 And as you get to those chapters again, 36 through 39, and start reading them, you're going to think, "Not only does this story sound familiar, but the way the story is told sounds very familiar," because it is literally word for word the same as

Second Kings chapters 18 through 20. Now there are some parts that are missing. There are some parts that have been changed slightly. But somebody is copying somebody here because this is word for word the same.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:13:56 Then after chapter 39, suddenly the tone shifts, and chapters 40 through 66 are dealing with the return of Israel, the return of a scattered Israel, and the return of Judah from Babylonian exile. And they are prophecies addressed to the people at that time.
- John Bytheway: 00:14:16 Let's emphasize that. It's not the return from the Assyrian captivity. It's the return from the Babylonian captivity, which hasn't even happened. That was what Lehi was prophesying about. And actually, he mentions King Cyrus in there who hadn't been born yet, unless he was really old.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:14:37 That's right. Now organization, that is just a very simple way of describing the organization of these chapters. It may be more complicated. Some think that Isaiah gave these prophecies and then later the disciples of Isaiah were the ones that organize them. And there are some hints in the text that may very well be what happened.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:14:57 Take a look for instance, Isaiah 8, verse 16, Isaiah commands his disciples. He says, "Bind up my testimony, seal the law among my disciples." Isaiah has disciples who are following him. He has another word for disciples is student or mentee or something like that. Apprentice might be good too. It could be that it was later disciples who organized the book of Isaiah as we have it today. So the organization is a little more complicated. Some think for instance that maybe Isaiah chapters 24 to 27 might belong to a later period. And so some of it is more complicated than the way I just laid it out. But that is a rough way of understanding the basic organization.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:15:42 The part we're looking at today is just chapters one through 12. And that can be broken down roughly into three parts as well. Chapters one through five are primarily Isaiah's prophecies against God's people. So more woes. And after this section, beginning in Isaiah 13, you'll see some prophecies against other nations.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:16:02 But in this section, Isaiah 1 through 5 prophecies against God's own people. Isaiah 6 through 11 are prophecies that deal directly with the Syro-Ephraimite War. And we'll talk a little more about that when we get there. And then Isaiah 12 concludes this section of Isaiah with praise to God. And it's a beautiful, beautiful section. That's the section we'll be looking

at today. Before we get into that though, it might be helpful to talk about some tips and tricks or tools for understanding Isaiah.

- Hank Smith: 00:16:38 Because I think many Latter-day Saints hear Isaiah and they automatically go into I won't understand mode where we don't need to do that. You can understand this.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:16:50 That's right. Let's turn to the Book of Mormon real quick. I think this is the traditional way we approach finding our tools for Isaiah because Nephi gives us some. So if we turn to 2 Nephi 25 and we actually get some tools for understanding Isaiah here. And when I say I think that we make it worse, I mean that because I think we focus too much on one of the very first things Nephi says. He says in 2 Nephi 25, verse 4 that they're not plain unto some people, not plain unto you. Nevertheless, they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:17:32 And so when we open up Isaiah and we start to read it and we don't understand it, we think, "Oh! I'm just not filled with the spirit of prophecy. I'm not spiritual enough." But Nephi doesn't stop there. In fact, in just a couple more verses, he is going to talk about how the Jews understand, the Jews back in Jerusalem in his time, the Jews that elsewhere he calls wicked people. He says they understand it perfectly. So the spirit of prophecy is important. It is important to be righteous and to be open to God's promptings as we read Isaiah. That is really important. But that's not the only way to understand Isaiah. There are other tools that Nephi gives us.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:13 He talks about the manner of which they speak, the manner of prophesying. He talks about knowing concerning the regions, knowing the geography and the history.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:18:24 Perfect. So let's start with manner of prophesying.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:30 That comes from 25, verse one, where Nephi says, "My people don't understand because they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews." What's he talking about there, Jason?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:18:43 Well, I think Nephi characterizes his own way of prophesying, as he often uses terms like plain and precious. He's trying to speak in a way that they cannot misunderstand. Isaiah has a different way of speaking, as do other prophets in the Old Testament. Their way of speaking is poetic. It uses a lot of imagery. There's a lot of metaphor and simile. And in Hebrew poetry, there's also

a lot of repetition. Let's take a look at how that works. Let's turn to Isaiah chapter one.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:19:19 Quick pet peeve here while we're turning to Isaiah one. My current ward has some great gospel doctrine teachers. This is not a critique of my current ward's gospel doctrine teachers. But I have seen gospel doctrine classes before where you get to the Isaiah chapters of the Book of Mormon, and the entire lesson is on how to read Isaiah, and you never actually read Isaiah. So as we go through and talk about these different tools, I want to take each one straight into Isaiah and actually put it into practice so we can see how it works here.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:19:53 So let's start with Isaiah chapter one, verse two. It says, hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. So already you see the imagery at play here. God is calling upon heavens and earth to witness. And he is talking about Israel as his children, and how he's nourished them and raised them up, but they've rebelled against him.
- Hank Smith: 00:20:23 That's not too tough to understand.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:20:26 Now in the next verses, you're going to start to see the use of poetic repetition. The ox knoweth his owner. There's one example. Here's the next example.
- Hank Smith: 00:20:36 Kind of like a family pet knows the family.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:20:39 That's right. The ass his master's crib. Crib is just a fancy old King James English term for a feeding trough. So those are in parallel. The ox knoweth his owner, the ass knoweth his master's crib. Master is another word for owner, an ox and an ass are different animals. But it's both the idea an animal knows their owner. So it's the same sort of imagery, same sort of metaphor work. And he repeats it twice. Then we get another repetition. But Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. So Israel is God's people.
- Hank Smith: 00:21:17 The animal gets this. Why can't you guys get this?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:21:22 That's right. Continuing on. Ah sinful nation. What's another name for sin, iniquity. People laden with iniquity.
- Hank Smith: 00:21:34 A seed of evil doers,

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:21:36 The seed, meaning offspring, of evil doers. What's another word for offspring or seed? Children. Children that are corruptors.

Hank Smith: 00:21:43 So it's the repetition.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:21:44 You see what's happening here?

Hank Smith: 00:21:45 Yeah.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:21:45 You get this constant repetition. They have forsaken the Lord. They have provoked the holy one of Israel into anger. So I think oftentimes, we expect to find ... Because we're used to reading the Book of Mormon more than any other scripture, we expect to find unique meaning in every sentence and that's not true with Isaiah. Isaiah is painting a picture for us. Everything we've read is just trying to help us to see that Israel is rebellious. That's his whole point. But he's taken a lot of words, a lot of poetic imagery, to say that.

Hank Smith: 00:22:24 John, that reminds me of you and I. You've taken a lot of words to say something very simple. That was a lot of talking for one very simple point. But still, that's the way he talks, right Jason? This is the manner of prophesying among the Jews.

John Bytheway: 00:22:38 I think we've already talked about the kind of parallelism as we've looked at Psalms and as we've looked at some of the Proverbs too. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Let's say it again. Who shall stand in his holy place? And we've seen that before. So I like that you said Isaiah's a poet and he's not going to talk in a plain precious way. He's going to wax eloquent. He took humanities Hebrew class instead of business writing.

John Bytheway: 00:23:07 That's what I tell my students. I had business writing. We had a paper we had to write. He said, "If I find one typo, you get an F." And it was the whole semester. But we really had to work hard on that. I want you to deny the listener the right to misunderstand, be clear, be concise. And I tell my students Isaiah did not take that class. He took humanities writing. Say it lots of different ways. Say it poetically. Make your meaning hard to understand. Go in and out of past tense, future tense, go everywhere and make people go and have to think about it.

Hank Smith: 00:23:45 But it does, it makes you think, the idea that an animal knows his owner and that the animal knows his way around the house, but Israel doesn't know. They figured it out.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:23:54 So the real advantage of this for our listeners here is if you are starting into Isaiah for the first time and you read a verse and you don't understand it, that's okay. Try reading the next verse or the verse after that.

Hank Smith: 00:24:09 Because he's probably going to repeat himself.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:24:11 Because he's going to be repeating it. That's right.

Hank Smith: 00:24:14 I've told my students before, Jason and John, I'd say, "You and I would say the sun went down. Isaiah wouldn't say it that way. He'd say the mother of the earth has made our bed in the tops of the mountains. And then he'd say it again. The light of the earth has descended into darkness. If you read carefully, it's not that difficult." Those three verses you read, Jason, those aren't difficult to understand. If you were reading slowly and carefully, you'd be like, "Oh, I get that."

John Bytheway: 00:24:43 Hank, we've talked about Joseph Fielding McConkie on here before. And he changed my life in one sentence once in class. He just said, "We read scriptures too fast." And seriously, slowing down is huge.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:25:00 Just slow down, especially in Isaiah. That's one of the tools for the next five weeks. Slow down. And that may mean that you are not going to get through the assigned 12 chapters. But that's okay. If you're getting meaning out of Isaiah, that should be your goal.

Hank Smith: 00:25:21 That's exactly right. That should be our goal, get something out of this, understand the portions that you can cover, understand those.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:25:27 All right. Let's go onto our next tip. So next tool for understanding Isaiah, Nephi recommends that we know something about, or that his people should know something about the things of the Jews and the regions roundabout Israel, roundabout Jerusalem. And so we can see some examples of how that would be helpful in Isaiah chapter one as well.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:25:49 For instance, take a look at verse 9 and 10. If you don't know anything, if you've never heard of Sodom and Gomorrah, then these passages probably aren't going to make a whole lot of sense to you. But if you know the story from Genesis about how the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked, and about how those cities were destroyed completely, then suddenly these two verses make a little more sense.

Hank Smith: 00:26:13 Jason, in verses 9 and 10, isn't this kind of an ... I shouldn't say an insult. But it's a condemnation. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom. Give ear under the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. I mean, he's basically saying, "You're as bad as they were."

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:26:28 And in verse nine, it's saying that they almost were destroyed as Sodom and Gomorrah. God allowed the remnant to remain. Otherwise, they would've been just like those cities and completely wiped out.

Hank Smith: 00:26:41 I've asked my students before, "How many of you know what point of the mountain is?" And they'll raise their hand. And I'll say, "How many of you are not from Utah?" And they'll automatically switch hands, because if you're from Utah, you know the geography. My students from North Carolina, they're thinking point of the mountain? That's the top, right?" "No, no. It's the far side of the mountain." "What? Why'd you call it the point of the mountain then?" "Because it's at the far end." It just doesn't make sense to someone who hasn't been there.

John Bytheway: 00:27:08 Growing up in Salt Lake, it's also a synonym for prison. Hey, they're going to send you to point of the mountain.

Hank Smith: 00:27:16 You might not know that. All right. Let's keep going, Jason.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:27:20 So there are some other examples we could see of that just in chapter one. If you were to look at chapter one verses 11 through 15, that's all about ancient Israelite worship practices. And if you don't know anything about how ancient Israelites worshiped, especially their temple practices and their holy days, then it's not going to make a whole lot of sense to you that God who commanded those worship practices and holy days is now saying he would rather have them not do those things if they're going to continue to act the way they are. If they're going to continue to live wickedly, those worship practices are not serving them well.

Hank Smith: 00:27:58 He says bring no more vain oblations, meaningless sacrifices. And if you don't understand, that's what they're supposed to be doing is going to the temple, making these sacrifices. Then you won't understand that verse. But if you do, that's quite a condemnation. Don't come to the temple anymore and bring your meaningless sacrifice.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:28:20 When we get to chapter seven in a few minutes, we're going to see how important it is to know something about not only

geography, but the history, the Syro-Ephraimite War and the Kings who are involved in it.

- John Bytheway: 00:28:33 Pekah, son of Remaliah, Rezin.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:28:35 That's right.
- Hank Smith: 00:28:36 I love it.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:28:37 So all of those things are important. Next tool. So sometimes prophets foretell the future. But mostly, prophets preach God's word. If we are reading the New Testament, I'd say mostly they preach the gospel. Prophecy can be about the future, but prophecy can also address the present. What I'm saying here is if you're reading Isaiah expecting everything to be about Isaiah foreseeing the time of Jesus, or Isaiah foreseeing the time of the restoration, then you're going to miss a lot of what Isaiah's saying.
- Hank Smith: 00:29:16 Because he was talking to his present audience.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:29:19 A modern day example of this would be imagine us attending general conference and listening to every word every prophet and apostle says, trying to find the secret clue in what they're saying about what's going to happen right before the second coming of Jesus. Well, most of what they're saying is not about the second coming of Jesus. Most of what they're saying is the message we need to hear in our present, in our here and now. And their message is about faith, about repentance, about redemption. And believe it or not, Isaiah's messages are roughly the same. They're about faith. They're about repentance. They're about redemption. So let's look at a couple of examples of that still in chapter one.
- Hank Smith: 00:30:05 So Jason, you're telling us to hesitate before we just automatically jump to, "Oh, he's seeing Jesus here. Oh, he's seeing the millennium here." That yeah, he could be, but there is going to be a present day, 700 BC application we need to see.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:30:21 And sometimes we make Isaiah harder for ourselves by looking in every verse for what is the future prophecy. What is the foretelling here? Rather than what is his message about how I should live faithfully? So there are some beautiful passages in here that if you're only reading it for descriptions of stuff in the future, you're going to totally miss.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:30:45 Take a look at Isaiah chapter one, verses 16 and 17. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. A beautiful passage calling upon Israel to turn from their wickedness and to repent.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:31:11 And that's followed just after by a promise of redemption. Now in verse 18 of chapter one, come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Hank Smith: 00:31:29 There's the repetition

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:31:30 And again, beautiful, beautiful message of hope, of healing, and one that we would read right over if we are only looking for prophecies about the future.

Hank Smith: 00:31:41 Future events. And especially since he just compared them to Sodom and Gomorrah to now have this promise of you can be clean. Your sins, though they're dark red, they can be as white as snow. We don't want to miss that too, that he was telling them like it is. But he's also offering repentance.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:32:00 That's right.

John Bytheway: 00:32:02 I just love when we hear echoes in the Doctrine and Covenants or other scriptures, because look at verse 19. What is it section 64? The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind and the willing and obedient will eat the good of the land in the latter-days. Look at verse 19, If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. And I don't know why the footnote committee didn't say, "Hey, let's stick section 64 reference in there." I think it's 64, isn't it?

Hank Smith: 00:32:26 I like it. What do you want to do next, Jason? I like this. Don't automatically jump to future prophecy. Even if it's about Jesus, stay in Isaiah's day, stay in 722 BC.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:32:40 For our last tool, let's jump to future prophecy, because Isaiah absolutely does talk about the future. And so there are instances of that all over the place. In fact, we're going to read one in Isaiah seven where he is predicting the future to King Ahaz. So we will see that.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:33:00 When we think about prophecy and fulfillment though, fulfillment of prophecy, I think we need to be really careful because I think we have unnecessarily limited ourselves in our understanding of how prophecy can be fulfilled. Meaning that too often, we think that fulfillment of prophecy works something like this, a prophet, at some point in the past, had a vision, saw the future exactly as it would happen, and when that thing happens exactly in that way, that is fulfillment of a prophecy. That is one type of fulfillment of a prophecy. But there are other ways in which prophecy can be fulfilled.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:33:44 And we're going to see example of that when we get to Isaiah 7, because of course Matthew talks a lot about prophecies being fulfilled, in the gospel Matthew, in the first two chapters, especially. And so we'll see that Matthew actually has a whole range of meanings. The word for fulfilled that Matthew uses is the same word that in other places is translated as to fill something, as in to fill a jar, or to fill a room with smoke. It can mean not only to fill up, it can also mean to complete. So something is started in the past and now it is completed. It can mean to complete more fully. So to full fill, to fill up fully.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:34:27 So there's this variety of meanings for fulfillment. And so that should make us a little hesitant to always assume that prophecy fulfillment means a prophet saw something exactly as it happened, and then it happened in exactly that way. That is one possibility, but it's not the only one.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:34:46 So here's the tool. When you're reading Isaiah, when you're thinking about prophecy fulfillment, Nephi, when he is explaining the meaning of these Isaiah chapters to his people, before he ever starts, he uses the word likening to describe what he's going to do, back in 2 Nephi 11. Another word he uses in that same chapter is typifying. He talks about how things in the past can be a type of things in the future.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:35:15 And when you're likening something, you're comparing one thing that's not the same as another thing, to that other thing. You're comparing two different things. So Nephi likens Isaiah to his people. So when Nephi gives us an explanation of what these chapters mean, it's important to keep an open mind and realize that Nephi is not providing the end all explanation of what Isaiah means. There may be additional future fulfillments that work in other ways, other than the way Nephi describes the fulfillment of Isaiah for his people in his time.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:35:53 Jesus said it much better than I did. But let me tell you how Jesus said it. This is in 3 Nephi chapter 23, verses 1-3. Here's

what Jesus says as he's describing the importance of us searching the writings of Isaiah. He says, "And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah." Let me pause there. Notice that whole searching diligently thing? I think that goes back to what John was saying earlier that he learned from Joseph Fielding McConkie.

- Hank Smith: 00:36:31 Slow down.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:36:34 A speed read is not diligent. So we need to search these things diligently for great are the words of Isaiah. Jesus continues here, "For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel." That's another clue to reading Isaiah. We should be reading it as a description of God's people, the House of Israel. "Therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles." And I think I'll leave whoever's going to talk with you about the final chapters in the book of Isaiah to talk about that, because that's when Isaiah really turns to talking about the importance of Gentiles.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:37:09 But here's Jesus' final point that I think is so important for understanding prophecy in Isaiah. And all things that he, Isaiah, spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake. Notice that Jesus doesn't say some of the things that Isaiah said have been, and other things that Isaiah said shall be. He doesn't say that. He said all things that Isaiah said have been and shall be. In other words, everything we're reading in Isaiah refers to Isaiah's time, refers to things in the past, and refers to things in the future. So Elder Uchtdorf has this great quote about how prophets speak to people in their time, but their voices echo through time.
- Hank Smith: 00:37:53 I have that right here, Jason. I'm glad you brought that up. This is March, 2012 Ensign. "Prophets speak not only to the people of their time, but they also speak to people throughout all time. Their voices echo through the centuries as a Testament of God's will to his children." That is good. Their voices echo.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:38:15 So I think that's one way of thinking about how Isaiah's prophecies work. They're addressed to people in his time, and yet they echo through time. And in those echoes, we can find new meaning. Let's just take an example. Isaiah chapter two, we're finally out of Isaiah one, Isaiah chapter two, right at the beginning, verses two and three. So this is a new prophecy. Chapter two introduces it as a new prophecy here.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:38:41 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Verses two and three here, and it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains. Right away we know this is a future prophecy because he tells us. This is about the last days. The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths, for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:39:22 Now I think we love that passage because of course the church headquarters is in a place surrounded by mountains. And certainly modern day prophets have seen certain events that happen here in Utah as fulfillment or partial fulfillment of this prophecy. I'm thinking right now of Elder Robert D. Hales. He gave a talk back in April, 2002, general conference. This was around the time of the Olympics. And here's what he said, "Isaiah, a great prophet of the Old Testament prophecies, and it shall come to pass in the last days at the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains." This is the prophecy we just read. And all nations shall flow onto it.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:40:06 He then continues, "As Salt Lake has hosted the 2002 Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games, we have seen a partial fulfillment of many prophecies. The nations of the earth, and many of their leaders, have come, and have seen us serving alongside our friends in this community and our neighbors of other faiths. And they have seen the light in our eyes, and felt the clasp of our hands. The mountain of the house of the Lord with its brightly lit spires has been witnessed by 3.5 billion people around the world."
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:40:39 So I think Elder Hales gives a wonderful example of how we can see partial fulfillments or echoes of Isaiah's words resonating through time. I think Elder Hales does well using the term partial fulfillment there to make it clear that is not the fulfillment. It's only a partial one. I have another example that we can look at the end of Isaiah five, a passage that we often assume means only one thing because of a quote from Elder LeGrand Richards, but likely has a broader meaning.
- John Bytheway: 00:41:12 Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote a book called A New Witness For The Articles Of Faith. And speaking of these opening verses of Isaiah two, he said, "This has specific reference to the Salt Lake temple and to other temples built in the top of the Rocky

Mountains. And it has a general reference to the temple yet to be built in the new Jerusalem in Jackson County, Missouri. Those in all nations be it noted shall flow to the houses of the Lord in the tops of the mountains there to make covenants out of which eternal life comes." So there's a specific reference, but a general reference, it sounds like, to all temples, because a nickname for a temple is mountain of the Lord.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:41:54 And Elder Hales does something similar when he refers to this as a partial fulfillment. He's not saying this is the end all. This is the only thing that Isaiah saw and talked about. He's saying this is a partial fulfillment. So back to Elder Uchtdorf's concept of the words of prophets echoing through times, I think we can see this as one of those echoes.
- Hank Smith: 00:42:14 I like this approach. It's a safe way of not saying, "Here, I know exactly what Isaiah saw." It's he saw things like this. I like that.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:42:23 And remembering the quote we read from Jesus in 3 Nephi, that the things of Isaiah have been and shall be, should function as a caution to us, not to assume that we have the end all interpretation, that it can refer to things in Isaiah's time and to future things. And we can certainly see how it echoes in our own day.
- John Bytheway: 00:42:45 When I teach Isaiah, I like to use four C words. I'm going to add. I'm going to have five. Now one of them is Combs. But I have four C words. So I joke. I looked out the window and what did I see? Four kinds of trees that all begin with C. I talk about Isaiah as a forest. And sometimes we don't see the forest for the trees.
- John Bytheway: 00:43:08 But the four C words are covenants, covenant Israel, Christ, which Isaiah doesn't use the word Christ, but he talks about the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah, and then current events to Isaiah's day and coming events. And sometimes the current events foreshadow coming events. But sometimes the current events are just current events. And there are dual and sometimes it even looks like multiple fulfillments of those.
- John Bytheway: 00:43:34 So I like what you're saying. Don't say that's the fulfillment right there. No, it could be there's an echo, as President Uchtdorf put it. And we don't limit it. We think there could be ... He's going to be talking to Hezekiah's people, but it applies to us too. So a current event might foreshadow a coming event, or it might just be a current event to his day.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:43:57 That's right. And I think there's an example of an instance where we have limited the meaning of Isaiah, where we have thought we know the interpretation. It comes at the end of Isaiah chapter five. So we're skipping a bit ahead now. But end of Isaiah five, verses 26 through 30, Isaiah gives us this description that begins in verse 26 by lifting up an ensign to nations from afar.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:44:24 And then as we skip down into the verses, by verse 28, it's describing these nations coming in a way that using language of arrows and bows and horses hoofs counted like flint. I'll just read the verse as is. Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind. Continuing on to verse 29. Their roaring shall be like a lion, and they'll roar like a young lion. And it continues to describe this roar a little bit more.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:44:59 And I think we've limited ourselves by choosing one thing that Elder LeGrand Richards once said about this passage, and that not a whole lot of people have said about it since, and said this is the only meaning. Here's the quote from Elder LeGrand Richards. He says, "Since there were no such things as trains and airplanes in that day, Isaiah could hardly have mentioned them by name. But he seems to have described them in unmistakable words. How better could their horses' hoofs be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind than in the modern train? How better could their roaring be like a lion than in the roar of an airplane?"
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:45:45 And so I think with quotations like that, we've limited ourselves and said, "Oh! Well, this must be describing latter-day gathering of Israel. It's missionaries going forth in planes and trains. And that is what this prophecy is about." And because Elder LeGrand Richards said it and we revere him as an apostle, I think sometimes we assume that must mean that this is his prophetic interpretation.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:46:11 But the truth is Elder LeGrand Richards is not the only one who said that. In fact, after World War I, a lot of Americans turned to Isaiah and other parts of the Bible trying to make sense of the great war, and found in the writings of Isaiah prophecies that they thought were about airplanes, airplanes specifically involved in attacks during World War I. So that was a common Christian interpretation that made it into books like William Barnes' Business in the Bible, later in Wilson's Dictionary of Bible Types published in 1957. The Barnes' Business in the Bible, that's in 1926.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:46:54 So already both those books are saying that Isaiah 5:26-30 is about airplanes. And the idea about it being about trains, that goes back even earlier. Elder Matthias Cowley, in his talks on doctrine, his chapter on gathering of Israel, talks about Isaiah five as gathering of Israel by means of trains. But he seems to be getting that from people who were writing in the late 1800s at the time when railway tracks stretching across all the countries of the earth and other Christians are also speculating that this has to do with the gathering of Israel. As one particular train track was getting closer and closer to the land of Israel, they're speculating this will have to do with the gathering of Israel.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:47:36 And so there are some common Christian interpretations that we have sort of inherited. And then because a prophet or apostle repeated them, we think, "Oh! Well, it must be a prophecy by a Latter-day prophet and apostle." And then we have then limited ourselves and said, "This must be the only meaning of Isaiah chapter five."
- Hank Smith: 00:47:55 Excellent. Jason, when I read this, knowing the history now like I do, I think to myself, "Here comes Assyria to take over, or here comes Babylon to take over." So we're not saying that Elder Richards is wrong here. We're just saying that don't limit it to just that single interpretation.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:48:13 There's certainly a way that we can see Isaiah's words echoing in our time, and read this, especially with words like ensign to the nations that we have in the Doctrine and Covenants as a call to the gathering of Israel. And so when we read this within the larger context of our standard works, absolutely, we can read into this, a story about us going forth and serving as missionaries.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:48:39 But in Isaiah's time, in its original context, it likely has to do with the war, and people coming with horses and chariots, their wheels spinning like a whirlwind and their arrows and bows ready to attack. And so it seems to describe that. And in fact, the end of Isaiah five here is describing war and destruction as a punishment for them neglecting the poor. If you go back a little bit, all of these Isaiah two through five are all about the sins of Israel and Judah at this time, and how they've neglected the poor.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:49:19 Take a look at verse 14 and 15. And that war is part of the judgment for how they have mistreated people. Isaiah 3:14 and 15. The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof, for ye have eaten up the vineyard and the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean

ye that you beat my people to pieces and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:49:49 And that's a message that absolutely should resonate with us today as well. Elder Holland gave a great talk back in 2014 titled Are We Not All Beggars where he quotes this very passage and says down through history, poverty has been one of humankind's greatest and most widespread challenges. It's obvious toll is usually physical, but the spiritual and emotional damage it can bring may be even more debilitating. In any case, the great Redeemer has issued no more persistent call than for us to join him in lifting this burden from the people. As Jehovah, he said he would judge the house of Israel harshly because, "The spoil of the needy is in your houses. What mean ye?" He cried, "That ye beat my people to pieces and grind the faces of the poor." That's another way in which the prophet Isaiah's words echo through time. They are a message to us today that the same sins of the house of Israel-
- Hank Smith: 00:50:51 We may be guilty of.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:50:51 Are repeating, and that we need to be aware of.
- Hank Smith: 00:50:54 If we don't realize that this, the end of chapter five, could be about a destruction that comes when you don't care for the poor, we've missed that entirely, because we're thinking, "Oh! This is about the gathering." So which goes back to that tool you gave us to not automatically jump to some future event that Isaiah is very likely talking about something that's happening in his, what'd you call it John, his current day?
- John Bytheway: 00:51:16 Current event or a coming event.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:51:20 So the tools we've talked about are knowing something about the manner of prophesying. So recognize that Isaiah's poetic. So expect imagery, simile, metaphor, expect repetition. Second tip, expect Isaiah to talk about the things of the Jews. That is the things of the people of Judah, the southern kingdom. And to know something about the regions roundabout. So know something about the history of all of that.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:51:50 The third tool was expect Isaiah to preach. So expect him to talk about faith and repentance and redemption and healing. All those things are part of Isaiah's message. And then the fourth one was when Isaiah does foretell the future, expect multiple fulfillments and don't limit yourself in saying this only has one meaning, the meaning to us today.

Hank Smith: 00:52:14 This is fantastic. I've got my toolbox open, and you've given me some great examples. What chapter do you want to do next?

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:52:21 Why don't we move on to chapter six? Chapter six is Isaiah's call as prophet. Let's just start reading right at the beginning in Isaiah chapter six, verse one, so we have the setting and then we can talk a little about what's going on here. It starts by introducing us to the time and place that this is happening.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:52:43 And in the year that King Uzziah died, that's right around 740 BC. So we're still just under 20 years away from Assyria capturing the northern kingdom. So in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. There's our setting. Everything he's going to describe here is going to sound like the temple.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:53:10 Some have speculated that maybe Isaiah was a priest because he describes the temple. I don't think that's necessary. And I don't think everybody accepts that because remember that the temple is a mirror of a heavenly temple. That's how ancient Israel understood it. When it's describing God in his house, in his temple, it very well could be a vision of heaven as well.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:53:36 His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims, each had six wings, with twain, he covered his face, with twain, he covered his feet, and with twain, he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory." And the post of the door moved at the voice of him that cried and the house was filled with smoke. Then I said, "Woe is me." Now here's Isaiah speaking. Then I, Isaiah, said, "Woe is me for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts."

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:54:19 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. So this is the altar of incense that is right before the Holy of Holies. That's what we're supposed to be imagining here. And the smoke going up from the coals on the altar. So one of these seraphims have now taken the coal off this incense alter. Having the live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from off the altar, onto verse seven, he laid it upon my mouth, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:54:56 And I also heard the voice of Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I, send me." So this is a description of this vision Isaiah has. It's similar to visions that other prophets have had, both in the Book of Mormon, we can think of Lehi's vision right at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, in first Nephi chapter one, as well as other prophets in the Old Testament.

Hank Smith: 00:55:22 Jason, I'm going to use some of the tools you gave me here. I'm going to go slow. I see some repetition. Holy, holy, holy, three times, the emphasis there. When he says he saw the Lord with a train that filled the temple, what would train be?

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:55:40 This is his clothing, his robes.

Hank Smith: 00:55:42 And maybe his clothes represent his power, his authority in his following?

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:55:49 And oftentimes in these visions, prophets describe gods as being larger than life. That is one way to describe magnificence. One way to describe grandeur or glory is to describe that in terms of height or size. And so gods are often described as being enormous. I say gods because I'm talking not only in Israelite tradition, but even if you were to imagine in Greek tradition or Roman tradition, much later. Gods are described as being giants. And that is one way to describe their magnificence, their power. And so this is describing God as larger than life, as we would say it.

Hank Smith: 00:56:28 Tell me, a seraphim, is that an angel?

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:56:30 Yeah, that's an angel. So there are these different angelic beings we encounter in the Old Testament. We sometimes encounter the Cherubim and other times the seraphim. And we don't really know a lot about these creatures because we don't get much of a description other than things like this that describe them as having multiple wings. So we can look to other ancient Near Eastern traditions to try and get an idea. We might think of something like how in Egyptian tradition, there's the Sphinx that guards the way, and it's got the face of a lion and these wings. There are these guardian creatures that are God's guard dog, might be a way of thinking of it, that's protecting the sanctuary, protecting the holiness of the sanctuary.

Hank Smith: 00:57:19 It sounds like these angels have assignments. They're talking with one another. And when Isaiah feels unclean, one of them

comes to him and fixes his unclean lips by burning them off, which sounds like kind of a painful experience.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:57:33 Which sounds horrifying.
- John Bytheway: 00:57:35 I enjoy noticing that for whatever reason, the King James translators added an S to a word that was already plural, the seraphims. So it's really fun to notice in the Book of Mormon, when you go to second Nephi 16, it just says seraphim. But here, it's seraphims, which is like saying geeses. And for our listeners, it's kind of fun to know that if you see an I-M at the end of a word, it makes it plural like Cherubim, like seraphim, like Urim and Thummim are plural, which is kind of fun. The Book of Mormon reference companion says that the word seraphim was translated from a Hebrew word that means burning ones.
- Hank Smith: 00:58:21 Interesting.
- John Bytheway: 00:58:22 They're bright and glorious, whoever they are.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:58:25 Yeah, exactly. That's another way to describe glory. We just talked a minute ago about how height or size is one way to describe grandeur and glory. Light or fire is another way that's used frequently to describe that.
- Hank Smith: 00:58:38 Then as you read that section of Isaiah, am I supposed to pick up on Isaiah feels unworthy? He says, "I am a man of unclean lips. I am undone. I don't deserve to be here maybe."
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:58:49 Which is so common a reaction in the face of the glory of God. We can think time and again of prophets having that experience, and feeling unworthy.
- Hank Smith: 00:59:00 Let's see if I'm getting this right. I'm using the tools you gave me. Am I supposed to see kind of a symbolic way of his repentance in this live coal going on his mouth?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:59:09 Right. So fire can be used to purge things to clean them. And so that seems to be the imagery that is being used here, that the fire is burning away the iniquity of his mouth, or transforming his mouth into something that now can speak on behalf of God.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:59:31 Let me give you an example of how this passage, everything we just read from Isaiah 6:1 down to 6:8, was read by some ancient Christians. Your listeners are getting a preview here. This is the

first time this has been heard publicly. This comes from that book I mentioned at the beginning.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:59:48 This from ancient Christians, an introduction for Latter-day Saints. This comes from Mark Ellison's chapter. His chapter is titled Connecting with Christ, Rituals and Worship. And he talks about ancient Christian worship. He has a box in this chapter titled a personal reflection on ancient Christian ritual and Latter-day Saint worship.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:00:10 And he begins this box in this chapter with a quotation of this passage from Isaiah. And then he goes on and says this, and I absolutely love this. He says, "In the fourth century, some Christians were comparing the Eucharist, that's the sacrament, the sacrament bread to the coal that the seraph touched to Isaiah's cleaned lips with the word, "This has touched your lips. Your iniquity is taken away and your sin is purged. By the sixth century, liturgies made frequent reference to the details in Isaiah six." Liturgy is a fancy term that means sort of the practices of the worship service. So what happens in a sacrament meeting service? What is step one? What is step two? That's a liturgy.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:00:58 By the sixth century, liturgies made frequent reference to the details in Isaiah six, and liturgical vessels and spaces were decorated with images of the seraphim and cherubim that surrounded God's throne. These ritual elements encouraged worshipers to imagine themselves in the role of Isaiah approaching the throne of God as they approached the church altar, receiving forgiveness and purification anew through the Eucharist, again that's the sacrament, and being transformed into people who could like Isaiah go forth with newfound confidence to bear testimony of God's word to the world.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:01:36 Then after that, Mark shares a personal reflection on this. And I'll just read the end of his reflection. He says, "As I sit in my relatively simple Latter-day Saint sacrament meeting, and take the small piece of bread, I feel led to recall the angelic words. This has touched your lips, your iniquity is taken away and your sin purged. I think of the many ways the Lord has changed my life. And as I consider the good that God wants me to do in the world, I feel myself renewed to say in my heart, "Here, my Lord, send me."" I just think that's beautiful. And it goes to show some of the beautiful insights we can gain from our ancient Christian brothers and sisters who also read these texts and reflected on what they mean to them in their time.

Hank Smith: 01:02:25 So they saw the sacrament here, the Lord saying, "I can take those unclean lips of yours, and I can transform them into the lips that give powerful messages," which Isaiah does. He ends up giving for the rest of his life. That's fantastic.

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:02:41 Isn't that beautiful?

Hank Smith: 01:02:42 We'll bring Mark on for our New Testament year, for sure.

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:02:45 Yeah, absolutely.

Hank Smith: 01:02:47 I like when Isaiah gets his calling, and go and tell the people. And he asks what I usually ask when I get a calling, "How long is this going to be?" Verse 11. "Lord, how long?" And the response he gets is usually different than the one I got. Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant and the houses without man and the land be utterly desolate. Can you imagine that's going to be the end of your calling?

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:03:10 It's worth spending some time on that part because Isaiah's mission is so unlike the missions that we receive today, when you actually look at what he is asked to teach. Let's take a look at that real quick. So Isaiah says, "Here am I, send me." And then in verse nine, God says, "Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not, see ye indeed, but perceive not."

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:03:35 And Isaiah has to be thinking, "What? What kind of mission is that where I go and teach the people so that they won't understand? That makes no sense at all." And it continues in verse 10, make the heart of this people fat, make their ears heavy, and their eyes shut, lest they see with their eyes and hear what their ears and understand what their heart and convert and be healed. "Wait, what? You want me to teach so that they won't convert and be healed? That makes no sense."

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:04:03 And so Isaiah asked the question that ... Isaiah is a little less forward than I think I am being right now in saying, "Why would you even ask me that Lord?" Isaiah instead just asks, "How long do I have to teach the people in a way that they won't understand? Certainly that can't be the end goal, heavenly father. Certainly there must be some other plan in place here." And then God's response, of course, is not very hopeful. Until cities be wasted without inhabitant. And until the Lord has removed men far away. There will be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. This is a very different kind of call.

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:04:44 One way that we might make sense of it is just by saying that the people must have been in a state where they weren't ready to hear the message. And so they would've been condemned further for the message. And so Isaiah is preaching to the people in that time in a way that they won't understand, but later on, we will see or later people in that time will see that the message was delivered and that people didn't understand.

John Bytheway: 01:05:09 So I love verse 10 right there.

Hank Smith: 01:05:12 Is that, do you think, a reference to the scattering that's coming?

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:05:15 Absolutely. And just to give an example of what we've been talking about from the beginning, the way that a prophet's words can echo, I think that this prophet's words also echo in the Book of Mormon. This passage of course is quoted in the Book of Mormon as well.

John Bytheway: 01:05:30 Second Nephi 16. Just add 10 and you get the Book of Mormon chapter.

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:05:36 And so I wrote an article a couple of years ago that was published in The Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, where I suggested that Mormon read this passage as fulfilled in the history of the Nephites. If you look later on in the Book of Mormon, if you look at third Nephi 11, we have a time when there is a great desolation in the land, a desolation that seems to match the sort of desolation that God tells Isaiah, "This is what's going to happen." When Isaiah says, "How long?" And he says, "There's going to be a great wasting and great desolation." It matches that.

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:06:12 And then just as Isaiah was told, "Make the heart of this people fat, make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and convert and be healed." Well, what happens right after that desolation in the land that happens at the time of Christ's crucifixion? Well, Christ is resurrected. And then he comes to the Nephites.

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:06:33 And right at the beginning of third Nephi 11, and again, this is third Nephi 11, verses five and six. And again, the third time they did hear the voice and they did open their ears to hear it. And their eyes were toward the sound thereof and they did look steadfastly towards heaven whence the sound came, and behold the third time they did understand the voice they heard.

And then what happens next? Christ appears where he heals them. So I think Mormon intentionally wove into his description of what happened among the Nephites in that time the language of Isaiah to suggest one of the ways in which Isaiah is echoing in that time.

- John Bytheway: 01:07:19 I love it.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:07:19 That was verses five and six. So it's a reversal in a sense of what Isaiah was commanded to do. Now, their ears do hear. Their eyes are open and fixed on the sight. And now they understand and are converted and healed.
- John Bytheway: 01:07:33 The idea of the prophet making their ears stopped up and the prophet making, it doesn't feel right to me. It feels like he was telling them that's where they were. And in third Nephi, they did open their ears. They did something differently. They focused a little more, or did something on their part that allowed them to hear the Lord differently. Makes more sense to me that it's something they had to do to open their ears to hear it.
- Hank Smith: 01:08:03 This entire chapter of Isaiah chapter six, there's a message here, to me personally, of you might see yourself one way. Isaiah says, "Woe is me. I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." And then the Lord sees something else. The Lord sees a prophet that is going to go and preach.
- Hank Smith: 01:08:26 This is Joseph B. Wirthlin, October, 2007. "We see ourselves in terms of yesterday and today. That's how we see. We look in the mirror. We see ourselves in terms of yesterday and today. Our heavenly father sees us in terms of forever. Although we might settle for less, heavenly father won't, for he sees us as the glorious beings we are capable of becoming."
- Hank Smith: 01:08:50 And then you mentioned this, Jason. You said this live coal is this transforming power. Listen to Elder Wirthlin here. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of transformation. It takes us, as men and women of the earth, and refines us into the men and women for the eternities. Do you feel like that could be a message I get from Isaiah six?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:09:12 Isaiah is transformed in this experience and prepared for a very difficult mission.

Hank Smith: 01:09:18 Is it safe to say that I can apply this to myself here, Jason? I mean, I'm on safe ground here to say, "The Lord can transform me for my mission."

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:09:26 And I love the connection Mark Ellison made with the sacrament. The sacrament itself can be a transformative power in our lives as we participate in that ordinance sincerely with the attitude Isaiah has, as of, "Here am I, send me." And of recognizing his own unworthiness, his own lack of preparation and being open to the Lord to transform him to make him ready for that.

Hank Smith: 01:09:50 And just to anyone listening, wouldn't you want to say, John, something like God has a work for you, and that he can transform you. And you might not see you in the way he does, but he sees you as the glorious being you are capable of becoming.

John Bytheway: 01:10:06 The new Aaronic priesthood theme that uses that phrase that I guess Moroni used with Joseph Smith that I am a beloved son of God, and he has a work for me to do. Not just coming here and see if you can endure to the end, and try to go to church on Sunday. But that he's got a work for you to do. There's a reason you're here.

John Bytheway: 01:10:24 And that reminds me of the verse eight, I feel like, verse nine, because it sounds like Isaiah is echoing another episode in the premortal existence. Here am I, send me. And I feel like we also said, "Here am I, send me," in the premortal existence. And now we have opportunities on earth. Whenever we are given a calling that makes us feel undone and makes us feel like we can't do it to voice our own, "I'll do my best. Here I am, send me. But I'm undone. I'm falling apart. But here am I, send me. I'll try."

Hank Smith: 01:10:59 That's awesome. That, combined with the sacrament, this could be a life changing chapter where you might skip it. It's Isaiah. It's Isaiah. I won't understand this.

John Bytheway: 01:11:07 And I feel like it's tough because we get to the end and it's that this isn't going to be easy. And how long? That's another thing I love to talk about is the how long. Who else said how long in our standard works? Joseph Smith, Liberty Jail, Alma Amulek in prison. I think Job says how long. It's not doubting that God lives. It's just how long do I have to go through this type of a thing?

John Bytheway: 01:11:37 So here he's saying how long and the answer's not that positive. Until the land is wasted and everything's ... So have a nice mission, Isaiah. And then finally that only kind of positive note there is verse 13. I mean, Jason, what do you see in 13 there? That's much more positive.

John Bytheway: 01:11:58 I'm curious to the teil and the oak, our friend and colleague Terry Ball, who is an archaeobotanist, how many archaeobotanists do you know? He said that the oak and the teil tree can have their leaves eaten off, and even be chopped down, but they'll regenerate because the sap or the substance is still in them, which it says, "They can that cast their leaves, but a remnant will return because the substance is still in there." I think that's pretty cool.

Hank Smith: 01:12:28 So when he says the whole house is filled with smoke, you feel like smoke in the temple, the ancient temple, was that the presence of God?

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:12:35 So it was traditional to put incense on that incense altar to fill the house with smoke before entering into the Holy of Holies, the most holy place, so that you are protected from the glory of the Lord in a sense. So I think it can be both symbolic of glory, cloud by day, pillar fire by night, but also in practice serve as a shield.

John Bytheway: 01:13:00 And I think too it helps us remember that Sinai shook and smoked when God was there. It's kind of this presence of the Lord type reference of what happened on Sinai, it's happening here. God is here.

Hank Smith: 01:13:13 Chapter six to me can be one that a gospel doctrine teacher can really focus in on and have a great experience.

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:13:20 Yeah. There's so much in there.

John Bytheway: 01:13:22 And Jason, you talked about this. Here's a prophet receives his call starting by having a theophany by seeing God.

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:13:29 Yeah. It's certainly something that we see, not only in the Bible with other prophetic calls, but in the Book of Mormon as well.

John Bytheway: 01:13:36 Why isn't this chapter the first chapter of Isaiah when he receives his call?

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:13:40 That's a good question. There's some debate about that. As I mentioned earlier, some think that Isaiah's disciples are the

ones that organized the book, and therefore chose to organize it by theme rather than chronologically. So that could explain it. This is really what we'd expect to be chapter one, because this is the call.

- John Bytheway: 01:14:00 Well, Robert J. Matthews said Isaiah's not a continuous story. He said it's like he took all of President Monson's talks and mixed them up and just stuck them in a book. But they're not chronological, in that Isaiah's prophecies are that way.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:14:14 And certainly we have modern parallels to this. For years, our Priesthood, Relief Society manuals were teachings of the prophets. And every year, we'd get a new prophet. And if you open up those manuals, it took the words of prophets given in different sermons at different times and sort of mix them up and organized them by theme. We'd have a theme of faith, and we'd get everything that prophet said about faith. And we'd move on from there.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:14:40 So we just reviewed the collection of Isaiah's teachings of his warnings against Israel concerning their pride, concerning their oppression of the poor and the warning of devastation. Now we just read Isaiah's call, and in chapter seven, we're about to get into the beginning of Isaiah's message during Syro-Ephraimite War.
- John Bytheway: 01:15:03 Please join us for part two of this podcast.



- John Bytheway: 00:00:03 Welcome to part two of this week's podcast.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:07 As I'm looking in chapter seven, Jason, it looks to me like I'm going to need to know who people are and a little bit of history in order to understand this chapter, right?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:00:16 Yeah. This is definitely a chapter that helps to know some historical background. And unfortunately, what we know best about chapter seven is the gospel of Matthew, and so already we begin reading chapter seven with a very different historical context, a very different framework than the historical time of Isaiah himself. When we think of chapter seven, we think first and foremost of Isaiah 7:14, where there's a prophecy about a son who will be born, whose name will be called Immanuel. And then we immediately think of the Gospel of Matthew 1:22-23 right after the description of the birth of Jesus, where Matthew says, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:01:18 And so because we are so much more familiar with Matthew than Isaiah, we go into Isaiah chapter seven, looking for Jesus. And of course, that is one of the beautiful ways that this chapter has echoed through time, and yet there is another possible reading of this.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:37 There's an initial meeting, right? A current day.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:01:39 Yeah. There's an initial meeting.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:41 The current event of it wouldn't make any sense at all. If you're like, "Hey, I know you've got a couple of guys trying to remove you as king, but don't worry in 700 years, this will happen."
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:01:56 That's right.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:57 It's like, "What? That doesn't help me a lot."

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:02:00 Yeah, the other problem is this is described as a sign that God is giving to King Ahaz, and Ahaz refuses because he doesn't want a sign. He doesn't want to do what Isaiah's telling him, but Isaiah gives him one anyway. The problem is, we stop reading the sign short. The sign continues for several more verses, so we'll look at that in just a minute.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:02:22 But before we do, I think it's worth noting, because we're more familiar with Matthew, and in fact because we're more familiar with The Book of Mormon, I think we often imagine Isaiah's experience to be something like Nephi's experience. Where in Nephi's vision in First Nephi, right after Lehi has his vision and then Nephi asks for his own, Lehi has a vision of the tree and Nephi says, "I want a vision of the tree too, and to understand my father's prophecies." Nephi has his vision, and in Nephi's vision, he actually sees a virgin holding a child in her arms, and the angel helps Nephi to understand what that means.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:03:00 So I think we sometimes transport that into our reading of Isaiah and imagine that Isaiah must have had the same experience, but there's nothing really in this chapter to suggest that Isaiah had that experience. Isaiah absolutely saw the Lord. We just finished reading a whole chapter about Isaiah seeing the Lord. That's without a doubt, but we don't know that Isaiah had the exact same kind of experience that Nephi had.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:03:25 So we need to be careful how we read it for that reason. It's just to give you an example of how other people read this passage, because again, we read it and we immediately think of Matthew and we think, "Who else could this possibly be? A virgin shall bear a son and call his name Immanuel? Of course that's Jesus."
- John Bytheway: 00:03:43 It's a miraculous virgin birth, the way we think of it.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:03:46 Yeah. To us, we think it couldn't possibly be anybody else. But let me give you an example of how some other people thought about it. This example I'm about to share comes from a Christian author who is writing more than 50 years after Matthew, probably 70 to 80 years after Matthew. It's a Christian named Justin Martyr. He didn't go by that in his lifetime, he was later called Justin Martyr after his martyrdom, he just went by Justin. But Justin Martyr was a convert to Christianity. He ended up writing out a dialogue that he says he had with a Jew, a Jew named Tripho. So he describes this really lengthy dialogue he had with Tripho the Jew. He wrote this down right around maybe 155, so middle of the second century, 155 AD. In this dialogue, he quotes this passage from Isaiah to Tripho.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:04:44 He's doing a little bit of Bible bashing. He quotes this passage at Tripho to say, "See, this is proof that Jesus is the Messiah." Then Tripho retorted, "The quotation is not, 'Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son,' but, 'Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son,' and so forth as you quoted it." Tripho continues, "Furthermore, the prophecy as a whole refers to King Hezekiah and it can be shown that the events described in the prophecy were fulfilled in him." Here's a Jew having a debate with the Christian and Justin Martyr the Christian says, "This passage is definitely about Jesus." And Tripho the Jew responds and says, "No, it's not. This passage is definitely about King Hezekiah who was King Ahaz's son and says that all of it was fulfilled in him. So to somebody else writing not too long, within less than a century after Matthew, they were still reading this passage in a very different way.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:05:49 So I think it's worth going back then and trying to make sense of what was going on in the time of Isaiah. Why did he deliver this prophecy and understand it on his terms first, and then look at how Matthew is using it. Because I think Matthew knows Isaiah pretty well. I don't think he misread Isaiah. I think he's doing something really special here. I'll show you how that works, but let's start with a little bit of background here. You've already covered in this podcast before the history of Israel up to this point, so you know that by the time of Isaiah, the Kingdom of Israel has fractured. There's now a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. That happened after Solomon's death in 930. This is a couple hundred years after that now. There's a Northern kingdom that is called Israel, still. Sometimes it's also called the Kingdom of Ephraim, and Isaiah will use both of those terms to describe the northern kingdom. Then there's the southern kingdom. It's the Kingdom of Judah.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:06:50 To the north, the ruler at the time of this chapter is a man named Pekah, who is the son of Remaliah. And to the south, the king is Ahaz. So Pekah, son of Remaliah is the king of the northern kingdom called Israel or Ephraim, and to the south is Ahaz. By the way, we know that Pekah son of Remaliah ruled in the northern kingdom from 735 to 732 BC, so that helps us really narrow down when this prophecy is taking place. We're still about 10 years away from 722 when Assyria is going to come in, but Assyria is on the border and is causing trouble. That, in fact, leads to part of the history we're going to see here.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:07:34 There's one more player that I need to mention who's significant in this chapter, that is the king of Syria, not to be confused with Assyria. Assyria is the major empire that's coming in, but there's a smaller kingdom that's just called Syria in the

location of the modern country of Syria, that also goes by the name Aram.

Hank Smith: 00:07:58 Aram?

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:08:00 Yeah. In fact, it's related to the word Aramaic. In fact, the modern language of Syriac is related to Aramaic and the king of the Kingdom of Syria or Aram is a king called Rezin.

John Bytheway: 00:08:19 Every violinist knows what that is.

Hank Smith: 00:08:23 So I've got three kings that I need to understand: southern kingdom.

John Bytheway: 00:08:27 That's right.

Hank Smith: 00:08:27 His name is Ahaz. Thank you, John. His name is Ahaz. He's the son of Jotham the son of Uzziah, and he's the king of Judah. Then I've got another king, Pekah, the son of Remaliah. He's the king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Then I've got this neighboring country with a king called Syria, not Assyria. His name is Rezin. I've got three characters here in verse one.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:08:51 That's right.

John Bytheway: 00:08:51 Is it Peekah or Pekah?

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:08:53 Pekah would be closer to the Hebrew.

John Bytheway: 00:08:57 That's too bad. I want it to be Peekah.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:08:59 Like Pikachu?

John Bytheway: 00:09:01 Yeah, when I teach, I say, "Peekah had a son named Peekah-boo, and when he was born, he spent time in that Peekah-boo ICU."

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:09:07 Okay.

John Bytheway: 00:09:10 That ruins my joke, so I want it to be Peekah.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:09:15 Right, so just to add to the confusion, remember that these countries also go by different names. So Syria is also called Aram, and that's where Rezin rules and the northern Kingdom of Israel is also called Ephraim, and that's where Pekah rules because all of those names will feature in this chapter.

John Bytheway: 00:09:34 Yeah. This is where I think my students get confused. First of all, we've got the Kingdom of Israel, not the House of Israel, not My People Israel, but the Kingdom of Israel is kind of in an apostate condition. So the context is so... And Ephraim, the tribe of Ephraim, is the dominant tribe in the northern kingdom. So sometimes Isaiah calls Israel Ephraim, right?

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:09:59 Yes.

John Bytheway: 00:09:59 What I love here is in this chapter, it's a good way to illustrate your key of understanding the geography and the place names, because he uses five different names to describe the same place. Israel, Samaria, the capital, Peek... I mean, Pekah, son of Remaliah and Ephraim. So when I teach my students, I say, "If I say, News came out of 1600 Pennsylvania avenue, news came out of the Oval Office, news came out of the White House, news came out of Washington, DC, I'm talking about the same place."

Hank Smith: 00:10:36 Just different names.

John Bytheway: 00:10:36 For them, they know that, but for us, we have to make ourselves a chart or something so we can understand that he's referring to the same place when he uses all of those terms.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:10:48 Yes, absolutely. One more thing that we should know about the geography is the empire of Assyria that is coming in, they can't come straight across the desert and the mountains to attack Judah. They have to follow the Fertile Crescent up above, and so on their way down to Judah, they would have to pass through the kingdom of Syria and the northern Kingdom of Israel. So Judah, the southern Kingdom, is strategically quite safe because Assyria has to make its way through two other kingdoms before it even gets to them. That also features in what's just about to happen here.

Hank Smith: 00:11:34 So knowing a little bit of that geography, knowing these names, knowing these countries, now I can understand what's happening.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:11:41 Yeah, so let's start reading a little. Isaiah chapter seven, let me just start with verses two and three here. "And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria," not Assyria but Syria, "and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up towards Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it."

Hank Smith: 00:12:06 It sounds like these two countries went against the smaller, the southern kingdom.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:12:10 Yeah, that's right. So right away, it's giving us some historical context, but we need to know who these people are and where they're located and all that, to make sense of this historical context. If you want more historical context on this, the siege of Jerusalem where Pekah and Rezin go up against Jerusalem and do not prevail against it is described in Second Kings 16:5. This is history that's already been covered on this podcast. And now we're seeing it again in the context of Isaiah's prophecies.

John Bytheway: 00:12:43 I've always had a question about the exact timing of the building of Hezekiah's tunnel. Was it in anticipation of the Assyrian attack or was it just for any enemy? We've got to have a water supply in Jerusalem.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:12:59 Yes. The southern Kingdom of Judah is at war with the smaller neighboring kingdoms quite often, but the larger threat, the monumental threat, is this empire of Assyria that is much larger. So Hezekiah likely had all of those threats in his mind. Hezekiah, of course, is the son of a Ahaz, so that's a little bit after the time that we're talking about right here.

John Bytheway: 00:13:22 But I just have always wondered, did he build that because of Assyria specifically or because of it's smart strategically to have a water supply that's covered up that's within the walls?

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:13:36 We're now seeing that in his father's lifetime, there had been instances where siege had been laid to Jerusalem, so there was in their living historical memory, a need for access to water by the time of Hezekiah.

Hank Smith: 00:13:52 This is really helpful, Jason, because if I remember my Second Kings lesson, I know that Ahaz wasn't overly interested in Jehovah, what Jehovah had to say.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:14:02 Yeah, Second Kings says he's one of the wicked kings, that's right. It tends to alternate: we get a righteous king and a wicked king, a righteous king and a wicked king. So Hezekiah will be a righteous king following Ahaz.

Hank Smith: 00:14:13 The son of Ahaz.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:14:15 That's right. Let's pick up in verse two. "And it was told in the house of David..." So once again, that's the house of David, that's referring to the southern Kingdom of Judah, to the king

there, that's King Ahaz. "... saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim." So the country of Syria and the northern Kingdom of Israel called Ephraim have joined forces to come against the southern Kingdom of Judah.

- Hank Smith: 00:14:43 Word got to the southern kingdom that these two countries are uniting against them. Is that kind of, "Whoa!"
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:14:49 Yeah, he's a little bit worried. It says, "And his heart was moved and the heart of his people as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." They're shaking a little bit here.
- John Bytheway: 00:15:00 Oh, I love. I've got "quaking aspens" in my margin here. They're just, "Aah..."
- Hank Smith: 00:15:05 So that makes them nervous.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:15:07 That's right. To skip down a little bit, to get more of the history, then we'll come and catch up with what Isaiah's told to do, but skipping down to verse five and six, "Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee," that is against the king, King Ahaz, "saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal."
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:15:40 So the plan, it seems, of these two kingdoms to the north, Israel and Aram or Syria, is to invade Judah, to depose Ahaz, to put in his place this person who otherwise we know nothing of, this is the only mention of him, this son of Tabeal, and put him in his place presumably with the assumption that this son of Tabeal I would be in alliance, then, with these two kingdoms to the north, with Israel and Aram or Syria.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:16:17 There's a little bit of debate over what the purpose of this was. Some think it was to defend themselves against the threat of Syria. Others think it was to strengthen their trade relations, but whatever reason, Judah isn't playing ball, so they've decided that they're just going to come in, depose the king and put somebody else in his place who will be sympathetic to them. So that's the context when all of this happens.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:16:50 Now Ahaz has his own plan. We see Ahaz enact this plan later on in Second Kings chapter 16. So I'll read a passage from Second Kings 16 in just a minute here. But at this point in the history, this is only his plan. He hasn't done this yet. So here we go. Here's what he ends up doing in the future. Now he's only planning it. This is Second Kings 16:7-8, "So Ahaz sent

messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria."

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:17:40 That's Ahaz's plan. Ahaz's plan is Assyria is still quite a distance from me. It has to make its way through these two kingdoms before it's even a threat to me, but these kingdoms are a present threat to me, so I'm going to go to the empire of Assyria and make an alliance with him and pay him out of the temple funds and some of my own funds. That will persuade him to be on my side and come and take out these two kingdoms to my north.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:09 But not us, right?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:18:11 But not us, presumably.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:12 No, no. Okay.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:18:14 Yeah. That's his plan. Now, Isaiah is told to go deliver to King Ahaz a message to tell him not to enact that plan. And now is where we're going to back up to Isaiah 7:3 to see what Isaiah is commanded to do. So Isaiah 7:3 begins, "Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field." Not sure exactly where that is, but Isaiah's being given very specific instructions here to know exactly where to go and find the king.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:18:55 This, by the way, also reveals a little more biographical information about Isaiah. Isaiah had access to the king. Not anybody could just walk up and talk to a king. So Isaiah perhaps is on the king's court as a prophet for the house of David, so he has direct access to the king and is able to go up and have this conversation.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:19:19 So here's what Isaiah is to say to the king, "And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted." Remember, they're already trembling like wind blowing trees. So, "... fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands..." Firebrand is just a piece of burning wood. I like the newer revised standard version translation of this, "... these two smoldering stumps of firebrands." It

continues on, "... for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah." That's Pekah.

- Hank Smith: 00:19:58 So don't be afraid of these two.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:20:00 That's right. And I love the description of them as smoldering firebrands. They are dying out already. So Isaiah's message is, "These guys are not going to be around much longer, they're already fizzling out. You don't need to worry about them. This is not what you should be worried about." So Isaiah's message is, "Don't do anything about this." In fact, he gives him a specific timeframe in verse eight, "... and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people." That's a prophecy of what's going to happen in 7:22. The entire northern kingdom of Israel is going to be completely gone. It won't be a people.
- Hank Smith: 00:20:43 Okay. Israel will be destroyed. The northern kingdom will be scattered.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:20:46 Yeah. That's the message Isaiah delivers to Ahaz. Of course, that's not enough. Ahaz is not willing to take Isaiah's advice. Isaiah recognizes he's going to need more, so we get more starting in verse 10. "Moreover the LORD spake unto Ahaz again." So here's Isaiah's next message to Ahaz. One message wasn't enough, so here's the next one. "Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD." Well, again, we know from Second Kings, it's not that Ahaz is concerned about tempting the Lord, it's that he doesn't want the answer. He's already decided what he's going to do. We read about what he ends up doing in Second King 16, so he doesn't want the answer.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:21:34 Isaiah's now going to continue to give him the sign anyway, and here it is starting in Isaiah 7:14. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." That's where we usually stop, but that's only the start of the sign. The sign continues. Here's what it describes this Immanuel doing. "Butter and honey shall he eat..." Now, those are two luxury items that are not easily available if you are in a city under siege. So let's continue here. "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." That's not the best translation there. Butter and honey in no way enables us to choose good and to refuse evil. So a better translation there is "by the time that he knows" to refuse the evil and choose the

good, so, "Butter and honey shall he eat by the time that he knows to refuse the evil and choose the good."

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:22:40 In other words, this child's going to be born. By the time he's old enough to know the difference between right and wrong, we might say by the time he's reached the age of accountability, he'll be able to eat butter and honey. The city will not be under siege. There will not be a war going on.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:22:58 It then continues, "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good..." So again, before this child has reached the age of accountability, "... the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." There it is. That's the sign, both her kings, two kings. It's referring to those two countries to the north, to the kingdom of Israel ruled by Pekah, son of Remaliah, and to the kingdom of Syria or Aram, ruled by Rezin. It's saying, "Those lands are going to be forsaken by those kings." Those kings that you're so worried about right now, they're going to be gone before this child is even old enough to know the difference between right and wrong.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:23:39 Now, the sign continues with a warning. "The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the days that Ephraim departed from Judah." So things are going to get bad. Things are going to be worse than they've ever been since the time of 9:30, since the time after Solomon's death when these two kingdoms separated, since Ephraim, the northern kingdom of Israel, departed from Judah. Then it says what is going to make things so bad "even the king of Assyria." So point is once again, Ahaz, don't do what you're planning on doing. Don't go and make an alliance with the king of Assyria. You're inviting trouble, but of course he doesn't listen.
- John Bytheway: 00:24:26 These verses, if you read them too fast, you don't realize 17 is kind of a prophecy. I tell my students, "Insert these words." Now I could be in really big trouble for inserting words into the scriptures, but I have them insert in front of 17, "If you don't listen to me, then the LORD shall bring upon thee and upon thy people and upon thy father's house days that have not come." Because this is what Isaiah's saying, "If you don't accept this sign, then this is what's going to happen." Is that fair?
- Hank Smith: 00:24:56 Yeah.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:24:57 If you move forward with your plan, yep.

John Bytheway: 00:24:59 Then, "The LORD will bring upon thee, and upon thy people, thy father's house..."

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:25:02 Yeah. And quite frequently, the Lord is definitely aware, perhaps even has made Isaiah aware, that the king will not listen. Nevertheless, the prophet still delivers the message so that future generations can learn from past generations' mistakes.

Hank Smith: 00:25:21 It looks like the rest of the chapter is all that the king of Assyria is going to do. It sounds terrible.

John Bytheway: 00:25:27 The Assyrians were a brutal superpower, right?

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:25:31 Absolutely.

John Bytheway: 00:25:32 Who else was called to go there and went west instead to Joppa?

Hank Smith: 00:25:36 Yeah, it sounds like Jonah.

John Bytheway: 00:25:39 Yeah.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:25:39 Let's talk a little about this sign then and how to make sense of this. If this is about somebody who's going to be born and grow up and before they know good and evil, the problem that Ahaz is facing is going to be gone. What child is this who is born of a virgin in this time? How do we make sense of this?

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:25:59 Well, the first thing that's worth pointing out is that that comment that Tripho the Jew made to Justin where he said, "Actually, the verse doesn't say 'a virgin,' it actually says a 'young woman.'" There's a reason for that. In Hebrew, the word that's here translated as "the virgin" is "ha-alma." The word "alma," no relation to the Book of Mormon prophet Alma, for those who study Book of Mormon names suggests that comes from a different group. The Hebrew here "ha-alma" does simply mean "young woman." Now people in that time may have assumed that if this is a young unmarried woman, of course she would be a virgin, but that would only be assumed. It's not necessarily implied in the word. It's also worth noting that it actually says "the" young woman. It has that "ha" at the beginning. It's "ha-alma."

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:26:52 It seems like Isaiah is pointing to a young woman that's there that is known by the king, saying, "That young woman there, the young woman who you see right there, is going to bear a son

and before that son is old enough to know a difference between right and wrong, these two kingdoms you're worried about are going to be gone. So don't worry about them." So jumping forward hundreds of years now into the 200 BC, maybe even a little before that, the Hebrew is translated into Greek.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:27:22 There's a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible that's made for all the Jews who are living outside of the land of Israel, in other parts. By this time, Alexander the Great has come in and has convinced everybody they should learn some Greek. So a lot of learned Jews who only know Greek, so the Hebrew Bible's translated into Greek, and when it is, this passage "ha-alma" is translated as "hay-parthenos" which literally is "the virgin." Again, it does have the definite article. So it seems to refer to somebody who's known who is definitely there, but it does have that more specific meaning. It could just be assumed if this person is a young maiden who's not yet married or was only recently married, that she's a virgin. That could be the assumption.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:28:07 So Christians using the Greek version of the Old Testament, read this passage as "the virgin," whereas those Jews who continue to use the Hebrew read "ha-alma" as "the young woman." That was the debate that Justin was having with Tripho the Jew.
- John Bytheway: 00:28:24 You've said this Greek translation, is that the Septuagint that we hear about?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:28:28 Yeah, it's called that because there's a tradition that 70 scholars all got together and translated it.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:28:34 So in trying to figure out who this Immanuel is, it's not really clear. Immanuel, meaning "God with us," that is what Immanuel means. It could be a kingly title. It is the sort of royal title that could be given to somebody in the house of David, especially since God promised King David, that God would be with King David. So the title "God with us" is an appropriate term for somebody born to the house of David. Some have speculated that Immanuel might actually be Isaiah's son, and Isaiah might have been pointing to Isaiah's wife, referring to her as the young woman. The reason for that has to do with a parallel between Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 8:1-3, where we're introduced to Isaiah's second son Maher-shalal-hash-baz.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:29:32 Notice the parallel here. It's really interesting. Isaiah 7:14 says, "Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both

their kings," referring to Immanuel. Then in Isaiah chapter 8:1-3, it introduces Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Then 8:4 says, "Before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." So that parallel prophecy between Isaiah 7:16 and Isaiah 8:4 have led some to think, "Okay, maybe Immanuel is Maher-shalal-hash-baz. That's a possibility, but that would take some other logical leaps. In particular, Immanuel is clearly part of the house of David. So then we would have to conclude that maybe Isaiah's wife is part of the house of David and that lineage in order to make that connection.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:30:35 So I think we should be open to that as a possibility, but I think we should be hesitant to say that's the only possible reading. As we know from reading that passage from Tripho, Tripho was convinced that this is a reference to Hezekiah. There's some question about whether Immanuel could be he Hezekiah because of some of the dates of Hezekiah's birth as given in Second Kings. But Second King's dates can be a little bit fast and loose sometimes. So the answer is, we don't know for certain who this Immanuel is, other than saying clearly it's somebody in the original fulfillment of this prophecy clearly is intended for Ahaz, in Ahaz's time and refers to a child that Ahaz would observe grow up so that he would know when this sign is fulfilled.

John Bytheway: 00:31:22 Yeah, for the first fulfillment. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, he said about this, "There are plural or parallel elements to this prophecy as with so much of Isaiah's writing. The most immediate meaning was probably focused on Isaiah's wife, a pure and a good woman who brought forth a son about this time, the child becoming a type in shadow of the greater later fulfillment of that prophecy that would be realized in the birth of Jesus Christ. The symbolism and the dual prophecy acquires additional importance when we realize that Isaiah's wife may have been of royal blood and therefore her son would've been royalty of the line of David. Here again, is a type a preconfiguration of the greater Immanuel, Jesus Christ the ultimate son of David, the royal king who would've been born of a literal virgin. Indeed, his title Immanuel would be carried forward to the latter days being applied to the Savior in section 128, verse 22 of the Doctrine and Covenants." That's from Elder Holland's book Christ and the New Covenant on page 79.

Dr. Jason Combs: 00:32:28 Very nice.

Hank Smith: 00:32:28 I want to hear what Matthew does with this.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:32:31 So this interpretation, I'm glad you brought up that quote from Elder Holland because this interpretation that I am sharing right now is not new. You can read about it in Elder Holland's books, lots of books published on the writings of Isaiah available in Deseret Book from Donald Perry to Victor Ludlow. I'm not sure how Kerry Muhlestein deals with this passage. I know he's recently published a book on Isaiah and he'll be on this show soon, so he can share with you how he deals with it. But I know this interpretation that we're looking at trying to understand Isaiah's own time period, is one that's been familiar for a while, but doesn't seem to be as common knowledge in, say, a gospel doctrine class. I think knowing this context helps us to appreciate even more what Matthew does with this passage.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:33:21 Let's talk about that now. This Immanuel and this prophecy about this sign is definitely related to a concern about the house of David. The prophecy is introduced in chapter 7:13 by saying, "Hear ye now, O house of David," after it introduces this prophecy about Immanuel. It mentions Immanuel one more time in chapter eight, in chapter 8:8, where it's talking about what the king of Assyria is going to do. It says, "And he," referring to the king of Assyria, "shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." So that, there, is addressed to Immanuel as if to a future king of Israel who's going to be concerned about Assyria overflowing the land. So this is definitely a strong focus on kingship.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:34:18 So just to summarize real quick what we know about Immanuel from this passage in Isaiah, we know that the child Immanuel was born in Ahaz's lifetime, that Immanuel's mother was present or known to Ahaz, that the prophecy was for Ahaz and assumed that he would observe the boy Immanuel grow up, that the land of Judah in some sense belongs to Immanuel, as we just saw. The Immanuel, therefore, is a Davidic heir.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:34:47 So what's going on in the gospel of Matthew, where he quotes this passage following his description of Jesus' birth and says that it's fulfilled. Remember way back at the beginning of our podcast here today, we talked about how the word "fulfillment" has a broad range of meanings. Sometimes we assume that the only meaning of fulfillment of prophecy is when a prophet in the past has seen something happen, and that thing happens exactly in that way, and that is fulfillment. Well, that is a type of fulfillment, but it is not the only type.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:35:24 Another use of the term "fulfilled" can mean "to fill out a prophecy, to more fully accomplish or complete a prophecy." I think that is how Matthew is using the term "fulfilled." He is suggesting that as much as a past Davidic king may have been an initial or partial fulfillment of that prophecy from Isaiah, Jesus fills out that prophecy more fully. He fulfills it.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:35:54 Here's why I think that. There's at least two different ways we can think about what Matthew's doing. One possibility is that Matthew believes that Isaiah seven has nothing to do with king Ahaz and was a direct foretelling of Jesus' birth. I say that's a possibility because you can see some of that happening in Jewish writings in the same time period as the gospel of Matthew, in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls have a style of writing called a Peshet or Peshetim. And a Peshet, which literally is translated as something like "it is interpreted," that's how it's often translated. It'll give a quotation of a prophecy and said, "it is interpreted," and then give the interpretation. The Dead Sea Scrolls tend to interpret everything as dealing with the founder of the Dead Sea Scroll community, somebody they call the Teacher of Righteousness, and Rome is often the bad guy.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:36:44 So that's a possibility, but I'm not convinced. I think Matthew's familiar with Isaiah. I think he knows what was going on in the Old Testament. The reason I think this is because this is not the only time in Matthew that he takes a passage that was about something else and makes it about Jesus.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:37:05 Let me give you one other example. Throughout Matthew one and two, there are a number of these fulfillment passages. In Matthew chapter two, he has already described how Jesus's family takes him and flees after his birth to escape Herod. Herod the Great is killing all the infants in Bethlehem. So he takes them and flees to Egypt. Then it talks about them returning from Egypt and Matthew says this. So this is Matthew 2:15. Matthew describes how they stayed in Egypt "until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." Now we know what prophecy that is, that comes from Hosea. That's Hosea chapter 11.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:37:51 So here's the passage now in Hosea, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." Now, in the context of Hosea, this prophecy "Out of Egypt, I have called my son," refers to the people of Israel as if God's son, and God calling them out of Egypt is a description of the Exodus led by Moses and then by Joshua into the promised land. In fact, we

know that's what it's talking about because we can continue reading here. It describes how Israel does, when God calls them out of Egypt as his son, they don't follow God. In verse two, it continues on and describes how they sacrificed unto the Baalim and burned incense to graven images. So Israel doesn't do too well when they're called out of Egypt.

- Hank Smith: 00:38:46 It's pretty clear who Hosea was talking about.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:38:49 Absolutely. So why in the world would Matthew say Jesus fulfills this? Because Jesus does. Because Jesus fulfills this in a way that Israel could not. Israel was called out of Egypt by God, as God's son, and yet they turned away, they worshiped the Baalim and false Gods, false idols.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:39:13 Jesus, however, called out of Egypt also spends some time in a wilderness, also is tempted in that wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights, not 40 years, and does not give in to temptation after that time in the wilderness. Jesus fulfills this call to God's son in a way that Israel never could, and does it for Israel. So all of the covenant promises that God made with Israel are more fully completed, are fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ.
- Hank Smith: 00:39:52 That's fantastic. The Savior more fully fulfills these prophecies by the way he lives than those who the original prophecy was probably about.
- John Bytheway: 00:40:02 Broader? Yeah. It's a broader way to apply that idea of fulfilling. I really like what you've done with that, Jason. It completes it. It is another dimension of it.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:40:14 Yeah. So let's now take that idea and go back to the passage in Isaiah.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:40:19 Matthew quotes that passage after describing Jesus's birth. As we've seen, that passage has something to do with Davidic kingship, with the concern that Ahaz would be replaced on the throne with another king. Ahaz was a descendant of King David. He is a preservation of the Davidic line. Remember, by now your audience, if they're staying tuned and being faithful and listening every week, they know back in Second Samuel chapter seven, God made a promise to David. Second Samuel 7:16, God said to David in reference to his descendants, "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne will be established for ever." There's also in Isaiah seven, a concern that the Davidic line is going to be interrupted, that the king is going to be deposed. And what's going to happen to

the Davidic line? Well, Isaiah makes a promise that the Davidic line will continue through Immanuel and that Assyria or Syria or Israel will not be able to depose the king.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:41:30 Now, is Matthew aware of this context? Is Matthew aware that Isaiah is all about this question of kingship? I think he is. If we were to take a look at the gospel of Matthew, notice how the gospel of Matthew begins. Chapter one, verse one, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David." Right away, the first figure from the Old Testament that Matthew mentions: the son of David. When Matthew gives his lengthy genealogy, there are a whole lot of kings in that genealogy. Christ is a descended from the Davidic line. There are lots of kings in that genealogy. Yet out of that whole genealogy, only one of them is named as king. Any guesses who that is? It's king David, that's in verse six, "and Jesse begat David the king, and David the king begat Solomon." When Joseph is mentioned in Matthew chapter 1:20, it's Joseph, thou son of David, as the angel addresses him later on in beginning of chapter two when the wisemen come, when the magi come, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?"
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:42:41 So Matthew is absolutely aware that this is all about kingship, and so it shouldn't surprise us at all that when Matthew turns to Isaiah, he is reading this as being about kingship and seeing Jesus as more fully fulfilling this promise of kingship.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:42:58 Now I mentioned before that Davidic promise that King David's throne would continue. Of course we know, and Matthew was well aware, that didn't happen. Long after Assyria when the Babylonian empire comes along, they conquer the southern kingdom of Judah. They take Judah captive into Babylon. They take them into exile. That is the last time there is a king of David's lineage on the throne, but notice how Matthew ends his description of the genealogy. He summarizes it like this. "So all the generations from Abraham to David are 14 generations." There's David again, Abraham to David. "And from David to the carrying away into Babylon are 14 generations." So now Matthew's readers are thinking, "Oh, Babylon? That's when we lost Davidic kingship." And here's the final part, "And from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are 14 generations."
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:44:03 He is setting up his readers to understand that Christ is the continuation of this Davidic promise, a promise that could never be fully accomplished by the kings, a promise of an eternal Davidic throne. Matthew was saying his readers have to understand that Jesus is the one who fully accomplishes that, so it should not be a surprise to us at all that Matthew chooses this

passage from Isaiah chapter 7:14, a passage about the preservation of the Davidic line through a son named Immanuel, God with us, as a perfect passage to describe Jesus and to show how Jesus more fully accomplishes all the promises God made to David. Of course, he's also showing that Jesus accomplished all the promises God made to Abraham and to Israel.

- Hank Smith: 00:44:55 I love this, Jason. I love, one, we've taken it in its original context and that's crucial. We haven't just jumped straight to future, just jumping straight to, "Oh, this is about Jesus."
- Hank Smith: 00:45:07 Two, you've shown us that Matthew isn't proof texting. He's actually doing something much more rich than just grabbing a verse saying, "This is about Jesus." He's saying, "Look, God remembers his promise all the way back from Second Samuel seven, and I'm going to use this Isaiah prophecy to show you that he remembers that promise."
- Hank Smith: 00:45:26 So we've used the tools you've given us and it's become much more nuanced and beautiful. I love the idea that Matthew knows exactly what he's doing. He's not proof texting. He's not just grabbing a verse saying, "This is about Jesus." He's using this... Man, that's just really well done. I really like this idea of Jesus more fully fulfills these. That's something I hadn't thought of before.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:45:48 Yeah, or fills them out, or accomplishes them.
- Hank Smith: 00:45:52 In a way that the original person could not.
- John Bytheway: 00:45:54 One of the things that I've read into that Matthew verse about the spelling of the name David, the dalith-vav-dalith, and the number value of that being 14, is that Matthew was fond of 14. It's kind of fun if you've ever been to the Church of the Nativity to go down below in the traditional spot that marks the spot of Jesus' birth is marked with a 14-pointed star. I think those are all trying to say, "Look, son of David." Which it sounds like what Matthew's trying to do, "Son of David. See this?"
- John Bytheway: 00:46:28 You mentioned Jay and Donald Perry. They wrote this book with Tina Peterson called Understanding Isaiah. I liked it because it helped me make sense of it. Isaiah seven is the Immanuel prophecy. That Isaiah eight is the first fulfillment Maher-shalal-hash-baz, the son. And that Isaiah nine is the Jesus fulfillment, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." There's three chapters in a row that have three birth prophecies in a

row. So to me, I kind of liked that the Immanuel prophecy, the first fulfillment and then the ultimate fulfillment.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:47:06 I think that's a really nice way of reading it from our perspective. Of course, a Jew like Justin's friend Tripho would see even chapter nine as referring to the future Israelite king. All of those chapters seem to address events happening at the time of this Syrio-Ephraimite, so they would see even the one who is described as a wonderful counselor and mighty of God as being theophoric titles given to this great Israelite king who would come along.
- John Bytheway: 00:47:36 Or they might say that the Jesus that came, it sounds like he's describing a political Messiah, not just a spiritual Messiah.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:47:45 I think it's interesting, that passage in chapter nine, this is Isaiah 9:6, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, the government shall be upon his shoulders." And I'm quoting it from memory because of Handel's Messiah. We know Handel's Messiah so well that we read this and we think, "Who could this possibly refer to other than Jesus?"
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:48:07 It's interesting when we look at things that early Christians wrote about this passage, they thought they had to convince people that it was about Jesus because at the time nobody read that and assumed it was. In fact, that passage about unto us a child is born, that's not cited anywhere in the New Testament as being about Jesus. It's only after New Testament times that some Christians read that and say, "Oh, that's about Jesus."
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:48:34 Just to give you an example, there's a Christian named Tertullian who's writing at the end of the second century, beginning of the third century. He's writing a work against another Christian named Marcion. This is in his work against Marcion and book three chapter 19, where he quotes this passage. And he says, "Isaiah says, 'because to us a child is born.'" Then he says, "What is new in this unless he is speaking of the son of God?" Tertullian is trying to be persuasive here and say, "Why would that be significant to say a child is born unless it's referring to a special child, therefore it must be Jesus." Then he continues, "Unto us one is given whose government is placed upon his shoulder. Which of the Kings ever displays the sign of his dominion upon his shoulder and not rather a crown upon his head or a scepter in his hand or some mark of appropriate apparel? No, only the new king of the new ages, Jesus Christ, the king of new glory has lifted up upon his shoulder his own dominion and majesty, which is the cross, that from henceforth,

as our previous prophecy stated, he did as the Lord reigned from the tree."

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:49:49 So Tertullian sees in this prophecy, the government being upon his shoulder, not as metaphorical, as carrying the weight upon the shoulder, being him taking upon himself the government of the world, the government being upon his shoulder, the Kingdom of God upon his shoulder. But I think it's interesting that he has to make an argument for this. He has to persuade early Christians that this passage is about Jesus because not everybody saw it that way, even in that period, even more than a hundred years after the gospel authors wrote their gospels.
- Hank Smith: 00:50:23 You guys, this has been so helpful because in my mind, part of worshiping the Lord is worshiping the Lord with our mind, learning these small phrases and connections across to the New Testament, to the Old Testament. To me, this is part of my worship. However, I can see that someone would be like, "Thanks for all this information, you guys. What do I do with it?"
- Hank Smith: 00:50:42 I wanted to read to you from a book of someone who I just simply adore. His name's John Bytheway. John, this might embarrass you a little bit. This is in the book Isaiah for Airheads. There's a little section that says, "How does this chapter help me today?" And about this chapter, John, you wrote... Let's see if you can remember what you wrote. "I really doubt that the Lord wants us to study Isaiah so that we will know about Pekah or Damascus or the son of Remaliah. At the final judgment, I don't think we will be quizzed on the geopolitical situation in the Middle East. For me, the greatest lesson in this chapter is the promise of Immanuel, the assurance that God is with us. I believe that this chapter is about the danger of pursuing foolish alliances instead of a relationship with the greatest ally of all." John, this is really good. You're doing a great job here.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:32 "Isaiah was trying to tell Ahaz that it doesn't matter if Syria is with you or Israel is with you. What matters is that God is with you." That's a wonderful application, John, from these chapters.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:51:44 I think, in fact, that is precisely the point that Matthew is trying to make. I mentioned that Matthew loves in his first two chapters to talk about fulfillment of prophecy. I think what he is doing is actually setting up his readers to constantly be looking for this throughout his gospel. But the very first fulfillment passage is this one that he quotes from Isaiah. He quotes it a little bit different from Isaiah because he gives us the interpretation of the name Immanuel. Isaiah doesn't provide that for us, Matthew does. Matthew tells us, "Immanuel means

God with us." And who better to fulfill a name that means "God with us" than Jesus Christ?

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:52:27 In fact, at the end of the gospel of Matthew, Matthew comes back to that idea. He relates the account of Jesus's disciples gathering to meet Jesus now resurrected on a mountain in Galilee, then Jesus gives his final commission to the apostles there. And the final words he speaks to them in Matthew chapter 28:20 it's Jesus telling his disciples what message to deliver as they go forth in his name. Jesus suggests to his disciples that they should teach them, those people they are teaching, "To observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Then Jesus says this, these are the final words of the gospel of Matthew, "And lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world. Amen." I mean, what a promise, and a promise derived from this prophecy given hundreds of years earlier by Isaiah to King Ahaz.
- Hank Smith: 00:53:30 Oh, what a connection.
- John Bytheway: 00:53:32 To think about every Sunday, hearing those wonderful young men say that they may always have his Spirit to be with them, every week. That's the point. God is with us. He can be with us. That's the promise of Immanuel.
- Hank Smith: 00:53:51 The very first prophecy that Matthew says Jesus fulfilled more fully is this Isaiah prophecy, Immanuel, which it being interpreted is "God with us." That's Matthew 1:23. And Matthew finishes, I've never seen this before, Matthew 28, the last thing Jesus says, "I am with you always." I mean, Jason, what a connection. Wow.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:54:15 I'm looking forward to the New Testament.
- Hank Smith: 00:54:17 Yeah. Me too. We're already looking, going, "Okay, what are we going to do? Who are we going to bring on our show?" Jason, you'll be one of those. I wish we could keep going verse by verse, but I think we'll have to do an extended version of our podcast. We still have Matthew chapter 9, 10, 11, and 12. Jason, what do you want us to see in these chapters?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:54:36 Let me just summarize what's going on here, then we can focus in on just a couple of parts to wrap things up today. Nine through 11 are continuing the prophecies that we've already been seeing. This is a continuation of the prophecies during the Syrio-Ephraimite War. Mixed in here are calls to repent with promises of a better future, with some rebukes. For instance,

9:1-7, that's definitely promise of a better future followed immediately in chapter 9:8 all the way through 10:4 by a rebuke of Israel and Judah. And if you look at 10:1-2, we've circled back to the theme of rebuking Israel and Judah for their abuse of the poor. "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed, and turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!" So once again, we get that time and again in Isaiah as a central rebuke of Israel and Judah.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:55:47 God says that Assyria is going to come upon Israel, and this is sometimes portrayed in Isaiah as a tool, Assyria's portrayed as a tool that God is using to punish.
- Hank Smith: 00:56:03 My students always laugh at that, by the way. They laugh at that always when I'm like, "God looks at Assyria and says, Tool." I guess tool is a term they use to... It's like an insult.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:56:16 I think it's interesting that he uses them as a tool, but then God is also concerned that Assyria is going to boast in how they have been used as a tool. So in Isaiah's 10:5-19, God then turns to rebuke Assyria. Look, for instance, at 10:15. This is one of the greatest rebukes of a tool. He says, "Shall the axe boast of itself against him that heweth therewith?" So is the ax going to turn around to the person using it and boast, "I'm the one doing all the work." He continues on, "Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?" His point is, "No, Assyria. You have no grounds to boast. This is not your doing, I am allowing this to happen."
- Hank Smith: 00:57:07 Then if my hammer turned and talked to me, first of all, I'd be a little bit shocked. Second, if it was telling me how great it was, I'd say, "Well, watch how great you are without me."
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:57:17 Yes. So God is putting Assyria in its place right here. After that, we get another promise of a better future in chapter 10:20-21. We get more about punishment by the hand of Assyria and how it's part of God's plan and will soon be over in chapter 10:24-25. Then it talks about how there will be peace, which is described very poetically in chapter 11:6-9. We get peace described as a time when a child can play on the hole of an asp.
- John Bytheway: 00:57:55 The lion and the lamb lying down together.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:57:57 Or the wolf and the lamb, yeah, and the leopard with the kid in verse six. A promise that the end of all of this will be peace.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:58:08 Then chapter 12 is sort of a conclusion to the prophecy. So the prophecy sort of ends at the end of 11. Then chapter 12 is wrapping up everything that's happened, acknowledging that all of this is the work of God and that thanks and praise are owed to God for his mercy, for his plan, for everything that God is doing to save his people, even though it might not seem like a lot of saving is going on. The preparation of this righteous remnant is for the sake of Israel.
- Hank Smith: 00:58:41 So chapter 12 is God is so good to us in the good and the bad because all of it is meant to save us.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:58:47 Yeah. Even though these chapters nine through 11 are really a continuation of what happened back starting in chapter six, talking about these events during the Syrio-Ephraimite War war and Isaiah's prophecies to the people then to warn them of what was coming and to encourage the righteous to have hope in a peaceful future, even though Assyria was bearing down on them and there was a threat of greater violence. Despite that context, once again, there are ways in which these words echo through time. I think it's very easy to read ourselves into these chapters or to liken these chapters to our people, as Nephi would say.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:59:25 I'm thinking in particular of passages like chapter 11:11-12. Let me just read them real quick, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people..." There's that mention of that righteous remnant again, "... the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea."
- Hank Smith: 00:59:55 From everywhere, sounds like.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 00:59:57 Yeah. "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." I think just as Matthew read into these chapters and saw in them fulfillment of Jesus, or Jesus more fully fulfilling these events, I think we as Latter-day Saints with a command to go into the world and gather Israel can read into these passages a more full fulfillment in our own day.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:00:28 This of course has been one of the major focuses of President Nelson. He gave that wonderful talk back in October 2020. I'm thinking the 2020 talk, Let God Prevail. He says, "For centuries, prophets have foretold this gathering and it is happening right

now as an essential prelude to the second coming of our Lord. It is the most important work in the world. This pre-millennial gathering is an individual saga of expanding faith and spiritual courage for millions of people. And as members of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or Latter-day Covenant Israel, we have been charged to assist the Lord with this pivotal work." I think a passage like this one in Isaiah is definitely one that will resonate with us as Latter-day Saints today, given our latter day responsibility to go into the world and gather Israel.

- Hank Smith: 01:01:21 That's fantastic. Reading verses like that can tell you why so many prophets today have said, prophets all through time have looked down to this day.
- John Bytheway: 01:01:30 I like that we're seeing kind of what we talked about setting up an ensign for the nation. Before, that was the Assyrian armies. Now, it's the beginning of a latter-day gathering. It says in verse 10 that, "In that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people." Then in verse 12, "he shall set up an ensign for the nations." So there's that gathering. And notice, four corners of the earth. So the scattering is worldwide. They're everywhere. Go bring them in.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:02:01 Yeah. In some ways we might think of that as the counterpart to the temple work we do today. Our temple work is part of binding up peoples across dispensations in preparation for the second coming of Jesus Christ. The scattering was influencing the nation. Scattering God's chosen people throughout the world to be that leaven or that salt of the earth.
- John Bytheway: 01:02:28 In my classes, I like to call it a fortunate scattering because it spread the blood of Israel everywhere, so now you'd be hard pressed to find anybody who isn't house of Israel and how we're going to go gather them in.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:02:40 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 01:02:41 That's great, John. It's like trying to find the yeast after the bread's been cooked. It's throughout the whole thing. You can't pick it back out.
- Hank Smith: 01:02:49 Isaiah concludes with chapter 12, Jason, which to me is one of the more beautiful chapters that we're going to study this week. This chapter 12 is worth just reading out loud. "And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and

not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." It's very rare, right, Jason, that they leave Jehovah?

- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:03:24 Yeah, it is. Absolutely. Usually it's capitalized, all caps LORD.
- Hank Smith: 01:03:29 Yeah. In this one, it's all caps JEHOVAH. Verse three, " Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." I mean, this is the pen of heaven. This is beautiful language. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." Wow. Those are some powerful six verses. What do you guys see there?
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:04:07 I'm immediately thinking of what John pointed out earlier when we were discussing the passage of Isaiah six where Isaiah cries out, "Lord, how long?" And John pointed out that that is echoed in the words of Joseph Smith in Liberty jail, "Lord, how long?" And the words of others.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:04:25 I think in the moments of our trials, we feel that need to cry out, "Lord, how long?" It can seem as if the trials will never end. And yet the beautiful promise here is there will come a time when we will look back on those trials and they will seem but a moment, and we will be healed. We will be able to sing to God, "Thou comfortedst me."
- Hank Smith: 01:04:54 Jason, you mentioned the times of trial. I thought of this talk Mountains to Climb by President Henry B Eyring, "When hard trials come..." Notice he doesn't say "if." "When hard trials come, the faith to endure them well will be there. Built as you may now notice, but may not have at the time, that you acted on the pure love of Christ serving and forgiving others as the Savior would've done. You built a foundation of faith from loving as the Savior loved and serving for Him. Your faith in Him led to acts of charity that will bring you hope." Then he adds this. "It is never too late to strengthen the foundation of faith." That feels to me like Isaiah chapter 12.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:05:39 It makes me think of President Nelson's recent talk where he gave us some visual aids where he walked down to the foundation of the Salt Lake Temple as it's being strengthened.

Hank Smith: 01:05:49 He called on us to strengthen our own spiritual foundations. Jason, we've had a great day today, Isaiah chapters one through 12. How would you sum this up?

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:05:58 If there's anything that I want our listeners to know is, first of all, you can understand Isaiah. It is possible. You can do it. So do it, read Isaiah. When you do, read it for its beauty, its poetry. Read it for its witness to God's work among his people. Read Isaiah for what it meant in Isaiah's time and read Isaiah for what it means to you today. All the ways that Isaiah echoed through time. Or as Jesus Christ put it to the Nephites, read it knowing that all that Isaiah spake has been and shall be. So I think that's the message.

Hank Smith: 01:06:42 Before we let you go, Jason, I think our listeners would be interested in your journey as both a Bible scholar and a believing Latter-day Saint. What's that journey been like for you?

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:06:55 I became a Bible scholar because I am a believing Latter-day Saint. Those two for me are one and the same. I am a convert to the church. I started attending church when I was 16 and was baptized when I was 18. Part of my conversion to the church was also a conversion to a love of learning. I had always struggled in school. I struggled throughout high school to the point where a friend asked me if I wanted to read the Book of Mormon and offered me a copy and I laughed. I said, "I don't read my homework. What makes you think I'm going to read that book that is ridiculously long? I'm never going to read that." She was quick on our feet. She said, "It's okay, I've got a copy on cassette tape. You can listen to it." So that was my introduction to the Book of Mormon was listening to not just any, it was the dramatized version on cassette tape, but eventually that turned into reading the Book of Mormon a little bit more, and then wanting to understand more and starting to read books written by modern day prophets and apostles.

Dr. Jason Combs: 01:08:00 My friends who invited me to come to church also invited me to attend early morning seminary. They sort of tricked me. They said, "Hey, there's this really cool thing that we all do every day. We get together about six o'clock and we read scriptures together and visit and hang out. It's really cool." I thought, "Yeah, that's fine. I'm not doing anything at six o'clock at night, sign me up." Then I got the official letter in the email saying, "Welcome to early morning seminary."

Hank Smith: 01:08:24 Wait, what?

- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:08:26 I immediately called up my friend, said, "There's no way I am coming at six in the morning. I am sleeping at six in the morning." They said, "Come for a week or two, if you don't like it, you don't have to come anymore." So I went for the next two years. And it just so happened those two years of seminary were the Old Testament and the New Testament. So part of my conversion to the church was studying in depth the Old Testament and then the New Testament, and of course reading the Book of Mormon on my own.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:08:55 So out of my conversion grew this love of learning. I wanted to know more and more. On my mission I had heard that Joseph Smith studied Hebrew, so when I got back, I wanted to do that. As soon as I was at BYU and had the opportunity, I studied some Hebrew and I just fell in love with understanding the scriptures on their own terms as well as understanding how they apply to me today.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:09:21 So from there, all of my career path led me to this point of a profession where I study the scriptures all day and share what I learn, which is wonderful.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:09:33 I think sometimes there's a misconception that all religious scholars out there are liberal atheists or something like that. But the truth is, overwhelmingly, those who went into studying the Bible began because they loved the Bible and are Christian. Most of them remain Christian.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:09:53 I remember talking about the sort of misconceptions of how things are outside of, say, a place like BYU. I remember when I showed up at Yale Divinity School, I was a little bit scared. I was a little bit timid. I assumed when I showed up, everybody would have an anti-Mormon pamphlet in their back pocket and be ready to whip it out at a moment's notice and take me to task. That wasn't the case at all. It was actually the exact opposite. The friends I met there of different faiths welcomed me in and were genuinely interested in understanding why I believed what I believed and how I worshiped and in sharing with me the beliefs that they had and the way they worshiped. It was such a wonderful experience and so enlightening.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:10:39 That's not to say that I've never had struggles in my studies with my faith, but the times that I have, they have tended to be not because of something I've learned, but because of my disposition. I think that's the best way of saying it. In other words, doctoral studies are difficult. They require a lot of effort from you and a lot of time. It is very easy to allow that effort and time to crowd out your own spiritual practices. When you

are studying the Bible for a living, when you're studying scripture for a living, it is hard to separate that from your own personal devotional practices with scripture.

- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:11:28 So there have been challenging times over the course of my learning, but they have tended to be those where I allowed my studies to crowd out my faith or to treat religion as something separate from me. I've had some colleagues sometimes describe it as putting on their church hat and then they take that off and they put on their academic hat. They're wearing these two hats. I once thought about my scholarly practices and my spiritual practices in those terms, but I no longer find that comparison helpful.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:12:05 I really like what Elder Neal A. Maxwell said about the disciple scholar eventually realizing that they are only a disciple. I am not two separate people. I am one person who loves to study the scriptures and learn from them from a historical perspective and finds great joy in how that informs my faith. I am also somebody who studies scriptures to hear the word of the Lord and to open myself up to have His promptings in my life.
- Hank Smith: 01:12:39 Wow. Dr. Jason Combs, thank you. What a great day we've had with you learning from this book and learning from you and your life experience.
- Dr. Jason Combs: 01:12:49 Yeah. Thank you for inviting me. This has been great.
- Hank Smith: 01:12:52 This won't be the last time we see you on followHIM. We want to thank you all for joining us, for listening today. Thank you to our executive producers, Steve and Shannon Sorensen, and to our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen. We hope all of you will join us next week. We have more Isaiah to study on followHIM.

WHO IS ISAIAH AND WHY IS HE A BIG DEAL?



- Hank Smith: 00:06 Hello, my friends. Welcome to followHIM Favorites. If you've been following us this year, you know that we take a specific question from each week's lesson, and do a little five to 10 minute discussion on it. This week's lesson is Isaiah 1-12. And I can just picture some of our listeners going, "Isaiah. Oh, no, not Isaiah." So John, the question for this week is, who is Isaiah, and why is he so important that we're always talking about him?
- John Bytheway: 00:39 Oh, how do we answer that one in just a few minutes? Isaiah, one of the greatest Old Testament prophets. But he was such a poet and a scholar and an advisor to kings. He was great because of where the Lord put him and when the Lord put him. But he also wrote in such a beautiful way. But it takes a little bit of effort.
- John Bytheway: 00:59 And like most things in life, you put in some effort, he will become one of your favorites. I like to use the analogy of, Hank, if I had to do a Sudoku puzzle book that I bought at Dollar Tree, and all of the puzzles were filled in, you would throw it away. But when the puzzles are empty and you think, "There's an answer."
- Hank Smith: 01:19 There's something here. Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 01:20 I think Jesus' parables help us do that too, "Wait, what does that mean?" And we read and say, "What in the world, what does he mean there?" And the reward of studying Isaiah is when you start to fill in those puzzles and go, "Oh, well, now I get that." And it becomes one of your favorites. But where I like to start is the name Isaiah. If you look it up in the Bible dictionary it means... You know when you hear iah at the end of a proper name, what is it, Hank?
- Hank Smith: 01:48 Yeah, it's Jehovah.
- John Bytheway: 01:50 So there's a lot of names like that, and it's kind of fun to look at them like those names that have the name of God in them. And they liked to do that, they liked to put the name of God in their

name or acknowledge God in their names. Isaiah means Jehovah is salvation. Or if we were to put that in bumper sticker language, "Jesus saves."

- John Bytheway: 02:09 What I love about that is, especially in the Book of Mormon, when Abinadi shows up before King Noah and the Wicked Priests, which sounds like a rock band from the '50s. King Noah and the Wicked Priests. But he asks them, "What are you teaching?" And they said, "The Law of Moses." And Abinadi says, "Well, why don't you keep it?"
- John Bytheway: 02:29 And then he quotes a bunch of the commandments, and then he says, "Keep the Law of Moses because you were asked to. But salvation comes in Christ." What's Isaiah's name again? Jehovah is salvation. And then he quotes Isaiah 53, which in the Book of Mormon is known as Mosiah 14, and tells them, "Jesus is salvation. Jesus saves." And that's why I love Isaiah because he reveals the Savior.
- Hank Smith: 02:56 740 years before Jesus.
- John Bytheway: 02:58 And yet he gives us such detail about Christ so that we would recognize him when he came. So that's one of the reasons I get excited about Isaiah.
- Hank Smith: 03:08 That's fantastic. I read out of the Bible dictionary, I usually show my students, if you read Isaiah in the Bible dictionary, go to the last paragraph, it says, "As one understands these works better, he will understand Isaiah better." Talking about the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. As one understands Isaiah better, he more fully comprehends the mission of the Savior and the meaning of the covenant that was placed upon Abraham.
- Hank Smith: 03:34 So if you are one of those people that says, "Man, I want to get in line with President Nelson. I'd like to understand the Abraham Covenant. I'd like to understand the Savior more." Isaiah is the key. Isaiah is where you have to go. So what's the big deal with Isaiah? Isaiah is dealing with things from the past, but a lot of the stuff Isaiah deals with is stuff that we see fulfilled in our day, especially the gathering of Israel. One of his major topics is the gathering of Israel.
- Hank Smith: 04:04 So one of the reasons this book can be so fun is you can find yourself in the book, especially if you plan on serving a mission, or if you really like to share the gospel with people. Wow, you are in the Book of Isaiah, he is seeing you and your work

happening on the earth, you're part of this... What did President Nelson call it, John?

- John Bytheway: 04:25 The greatest work you could ever be involved in is the gathering of Israel. And Heavenly Father sent you to earth at this time, that is not an accident. There's a reason for that. And Isaiah talks about what we all have to do. When I wrote my little Isaiah for Airheads book, I talked about current events and coming events.
- John Bytheway: 04:45 One of the things that you can stumble over, there are 108 different place names in Isaiah. And if I were to say to you Hank, Springville, Provo, Lehi, Pleasant Grove, you know where they are. But if I start saying all these names like Anathoth, and Migron, and Carchemish. Well, "I don't know what he's talking about."
- John Bytheway: 05:05 And this is why it's so nice to live in the latter days, you can find a map. You can listen to followHIM. You can get out your Come Follow Me manual and you can start to put those puzzle pieces together and finish that Sudoku puzzle. And then you go, "Look, I did that. I now love Isaiah 53 because I can see Christ in there." He was despised, he was rejected of men. We hid our faces from him. But when his soul is an offering for sin, he will see his seed and we start to put it all together. And it gets exciting to us and becomes one of our favorites.
- Hank Smith: 05:39 Yeah. That's fantastic. I've heard it said that Isaiah is one of the best writers in the history of the world if not the best writer in the history of the world. So good that Jesus himself said, "A commandment, I give unto you, that you search Isaiah diligently." As we study Isaiah, please join us on our full podcast.
- Hank Smith: 06:00 We're going to take apart as much of Isaiah as we can. The podcast is called, followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. We're going to have multiple biblical scholars with us to help us take this apart, a piece at a time. Who knows? Maybe you'll walk away going, "You know what? I feel like I understand it just a little bit better." And then join us next week for another followHIM Favorites.