



“A Marvellous Work and a Wonder”

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:

Do Isaiah's warnings about Babylon apply to us today? Dr. Kerry Muhlestein explores the applicable history of Israel, Judah, and Isaiah's prophecies to the Israelites. Dr. Muhlestein examines how merciful God is with all of his children.

Part 2:

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein returns and examines the voices "out of the dust" that remind every Saint of the redemption of Jesus Christ through covenants.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:00 Part 1–Dr. Kerry Muhlestein
- 01:57 Introduction of Dr. Kerry Muhlestein
- 04:05 Background to this section of Isaiah
- 08:07 Being Covenant Conscious
- 09:00 Understanding Israelite political history
- 10:56 Reminder to listen to Episode 29 with Dr. Joshua Sears
- 15:22 Isaiah discusses the Scattering and Gathering of Israel
- 16:36 Isaiah isn't organized chronologically
- 19:07 Isaiah's warnings to Israel regarding bad leadership
- 21:34 The merciful God of the Hebrew Bible
- 26:43 Babylon and Satan
- 29:00 Satan and Babylon will fall
- 31:25 Isaiah 22 and the poetry of Isaiah
- 34:35 Review of what Hezekiah has done
- 37:11 Hezekiah's Tunnels
- 41:08 God warns Israel about wasting time and money on worldly things
- 45:09 The need to replace a bad habit with a good action
- 46:09 Rabshakeh and Eliakim
- 49:00 Clay covenant nail
- 54:00 Remember original context
- 57:00 Isaiah 24-27 are a cohesive unit
- 1:02:41 Clues to covenant language
- 1:06:02 What separates us from God
- 1:09:17 End of Part I–Dr. Kerry Muhlestein

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II– Dr. Kerry Muhlestein
- 00:08 A destroying God
- 04:31 The woes
- 06:31 A letter from a listener
- 09:04 Isaiah speaks to the Northern Kingdom
- 12:35 The Israelites are listening to false prophets
- 18:32 President Nelson tells us to make time for Christ
- 22:10 The antidote to spiritual vomit
- 27:42 Assyria doesn't conquer Jerusalem
- 33:35 Voices out of the dust
- 35:56 Familiar spirits

- 38:41 The world cannot satisfy
- 43:21 Alma prayed for his son to a “knowledge of the truth”
- 46:22 Charles Anthon
- 50:23 The most important work in the world
- 53:02 The Spirit heightens our abilities
- 55:39 We dislike prophets to tell us our sins
- 59:46 Jesus has standards
- 1:02:14 Dr. Kerry Muhlestein shares his major takeaways from Isaiah
- 1:14:22 End of Part II–Dr. Kerry Muhlestein

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Biographical Information:



Kerry received his B.S. from BYU in Psychology with a Hebrew minor. As an undergraduate he spent time at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies in the intensive Hebrew program. He received an M.A. in Ancient Near Eastern Studies from BYU and his Ph.D. from UCLA in Egyptology, where in his final year he was named the UCLA Affiliates Graduate Student of the Year. He taught courses in Hebrew and Religion part time at BYU and the UVSC extension center, as well as in history at Cal Poly Pomona and UCLA. He also taught early morning seminary and at the Westwood (UCLA) Institute of Religion. His first full time appointment was a joint position in Religion and History at BYU-Hawaii. He is the director of the BYU Egypt Excavation Project. He was selected by the Princeton Review in 2012 as one of the best 300 professors in the nation (the top .02% of those considered). He was also a Visiting Fellow at the University of Oxford for the 2016-17 academic year. He has published 9 books, over 60 peer reviewed articles, and has done over 75 academic presentations. He and his wife, Julianne, are the parents of six children, and together they have lived in Jerusalem while Kerry has taught there on multiple occasions. He has served as the chairman of a national committee for the American Research Center in Egypt and serves on their Research Supporting Member Council. He has also served on a committee for the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities, and currently serves on their Board of Trustees and as a Vice President of the organization, and has served as president. He has been the co-chair for the Egyptian Archaeology Session of the American Schools of Oriental Research. He is also a Senior Fellow of the William F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research. He is involved with the International Association of Egyptologists, and has worked with Educational Testing Services on their AP World History exam.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:01	Welcome to followHIM, 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, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith and I am your host. I am here with a co-host, I will describe as a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress and a refuge from the storm. John, when I read Isaiah 25:4, I thought of you. Now, you're going to say, "Oh, that's not me." But John, think of how many people who have been driving with their kids, they got their kids stuck in the car on the freeway and they throw in a John Bytheway talk. And it becomes a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy, and a refuge from the storm. So John, take it as a compliment. I don't know if Isaiah specifically was talking about you, but I'm going to interpret that scripture.
John Bytheway:	00:01:08	I thought you were going to say they throw in a John Bytheway tape, because that's how far back we're going now.
Hank Smith:	00:01:16	Yes, the eight track.
John Bytheway:	00:01:17	Yeah, the eight track. I can't possibly live up to these adjectives, but for those who have cassette players in their cars.
Hank Smith:	00:01:26	Yep. I do my own talks on CD, John and my kids like yours.
John Bytheway:	00:01:32	And my kids like yours more than mine. We listen to yours. So we need a third party to say good things to our kids.

Hank Smith: 00:01:40 That's how it works. We are back in Isaiah this week. We had a great first week in Isaiah and we've got a couple more to go. I think Isaiah is opening up to us and our listeners, John. We have someone gifted with this book. Tell everybody who's joining us.

John Bytheway: 00:01:57 Yeah, I think that our listeners will be excited that we have Dr. Kerry Muhlestein back again. I've had half a dozen people come into me about previous podcasts that we did with Kerry. So we're really excited to have him back. He received his bachelors from BYU in psychology with Hebrew minor. As an undergraduate, he spent time at the BYU Jerusalem center for near Eastern studies in the intensive Hebrew program, received an MA in ancient near Eastern studies from BYU and a PhD from UCLA in Egyptology where in his final year he was named the UCLA affiliates graduate student of the year.

Hank Smith: 00:02:35 Wow.

John Bytheway: 00:02:35 He's the director of the BYU Egypt Excavation Project. And in association with this works on understanding the pyramid excavated there as well as their Greco Roman culture represented at the site in the advent of Christianity in Egypt. And for today, I wanted to mention his book, Learning to Love Isaiah: A Guide and Commentary has been helpful to so many. I just love the title, Learning to Love Isaiah. And that's why we're here today. And Kerry, we're really happy to have you back. Thanks for coming again.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:03:07 Well, thanks for having me back. I'm so grateful. I do have to say this is a very true story that when we really want our kids to get a gospel principle, I know they won't listen to me, but the two people, they will listen to, the two people they're fans of are Hank and John. That's the ones that we use. We can get them to listen to. And I'll tell you another story. My daughter, as a freshman took Hank's Book of Mormon class. And one day someone was asking her, "Well, why don't you take your dad's religion class?" And she said, "Well, unlike my dad, Hank Smith actually is funny." That's just funny. So you are on the eight track in our car.

Hank Smith: 00:03:44 Hey, I'll take it. I'll take it. My own daughter starts at BYU this fall and I'm interested to see the religion classes she chooses to take. And I doubt it'll be mine.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:04:00 You're never a prophet in your own family. Yep.

- Hank Smith: 00:04:05 Hey Kerry, we want to give all the time to Isaiah today. We're in our second section. I think there's five lessons in the Come, Follow Me manual about Isaiah. And this is our second one. Starts around Isaiah 13, but I'm sure you're going to want to do a little bit of background, help our listeners approach the book of Isaiah in a way that now they can go in and it doesn't read like, "I don't understand a word that he's saying. He might as well be writing in a different language." What do we need to know in order to go in and at least glean some things out of these chapters?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:04:39 That's a great question. I love helping people understand Isaiah. It just makes me happy. I know you got some great guidance from Dr. Combs last week. He's just so brilliant at this kind of thing. So I don't want to repeat the same things, but I will say that one of the main keys and he did touch on this and we'll end up touching on it today is to look for how Isaiah is fulfilled in more than one way. It's so often we see the chapter heading that says like millennial Christ or meridian of time Christ. And that's true, but that doesn't mean that's the only interpretation.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:05:09 They weren't giving us the comprehensive commentary in those chapter headings. In almost everything there is an original context. And when we understand the original context and the way it's fulfilled in Isaiah's day, we can better understand how it's fulfilled in Christ's day or how it's fulfilled in our day. So that would be one of the things I would suggest. I know you've already talked about that a bit. Maybe I have just two other suggestions, although, we'll do three. I know there are lots more we could give. The first one is just quick and that's just to slow down.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:05:38 When we're going to read Isaiah, it's not like the narrative chapters that we were reading when we were doing the stories of the Exodus or Abraham going down into Egypt or something like that. This is deep stuff. Isaiah is, I think, probably the most gifted writer in the history of the world. You'll probably agree he's at least in the top 10. He packed a lot of material into his words and you just have to take some time to do it right. And if you can't get through the whole reading, I'd say it's better to do five chapters well than 10 chapters poorly.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:06:07 So slow down and take some time and look for symbols. Isaiah is a master at painting pictures with his words. So he has images he wants us to feel. I think often that's what we should do is ask what is Isaiah intending for me to feel here? But he usually conveys those images by symbols. So slow down. When you find a symbol, when you find him talking about, say planting, and he

says, "I plant this kind of seed this way and this kind this way," learn about the seeds. You can just get online.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:06:37 I mean, you could use a commentary, but you can also just get online. And so when you learn the literal symbol, then you're better prepared to ask yourself, "Well, how would they have perceived this in Isaiah's day? How might that apply in my day?" But too often, we skip that first part about the literal symbol.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:06:52 So I think that's an important strategy. I'll give you one last one and then we can find out what strategies have worked for you guys. But I would say another real key is to make sure you understand and look for the Abrahamic covenant. Isaiah writes about the Abrahamic covenant, probably more than anything else. And in fact, often when he is talking about Christ, he's talking about how Christ fulfills the covenant.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:07:15 Christ makes it possible for us to be redeemed, which is a promise in the covenant. So if you know the promises of the covenant that you'll have a land or that you'll be protected, or that you'll be blessed, or that you'll have a righteous ruler, then you can see when he says that these are being fulfilled or when he says the opposite of them are happening. So if he says that all of your people have been killed in war, one of the things he's saying is you've broken the covenant, so you're not getting the blessings of the covenant. But if he says, "No, now you have so many children that there's not room in your tent," so you need to make your tent bigger. You need to then make your cords longer and strengthen your stakes, what he's saying is, "Well, yeah, you've got this posterity that was a promise of the covenant."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:07:53 So really what he's saying is you're getting all of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. And when you key into that covenant, you'll find it is everywhere in Isaiah and you understand Isaiah much better when you recognize he's talking about the covenant.

Hank Smith: 00:08:06 Fantastic.

John Bytheway: 00:08:07 That is great. I feel like President Nelson, I too remember a talk that Elder Bednar gave where he said going on a mission isn't something you do, it's something you are because you are the children of Abraham. Just, I think there's a greater... To quote Robert Millet, a greater covenant consciousness the past dozen or so years. And I love that we're talking more about the Abrahamic covenant. So I'm really glad you mentioned that, but let me go back to what's worked for us. I just want to agree with

you and looking for symbols, I think it was Victor Ludlow who said Jesus taught in simple parables, Isaiah taught in complex symbols.

- John Bytheway: 00:08:46 I feel like the process of trying to understand those is part of the joy of studying Isaiah because you learn so much in trying to, "What does this mean?" And discovering what those symbols are. So totally amen to what you just said there.
- Hank Smith: 00:09:00 Yeah. I think for me understanding the political history, really all of a sudden opened up Isaiah for me. Just the things we've been going through in previous episodes about coming into the promised land and then deciding we wanted a king and how we had our three kings and things fell apart. Here comes Isaiah right before... Correct me if I'm wrong here, Kerry, but just a couple of decades before the fall of the northern kingdom he's coming in and he's saying, "You're going to fall." And when you understand that, you can see it in his writings. You're like, I get what he's talking about. And then turning around and speaking to the southern kingdom saying, "You're not far behind."
- Hank Smith: 00:09:45 He's speaking to both of these kingdoms. Had I not known that history and what had happened, I would've been lost. And then to see where the Book of Mormon fits exactly just before the fall of that southern kingdom. It's a testimony builder for the Book of Mormon. But I can see why Nephi loves Isaiah so much. He is the prophet saying there's going to be a gathering. There's going to be a gathering. And if you're Nephi's family, you got to rely on that promise that you're not just lost and forgotten. One day there's going to be a gathering and they are set on that promise. All of a sudden it clicked. This is why Nephi loves Isaiah so much.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:10:24 Yeah. Because they need that promise to come true for them because they have been scattered. I have to say amen to what you're saying. That's the other great key is to know the history and the politics. And as you said, Isaiah prophesied warning that the northern kingdom will be scattered and destroyed. During his ministry, while he is still prophesying, they are destroyed and scattered. And the southern kingdom is nearly destroyed. And the only reason they aren't is because Hezekiah listens to Isaiah and gets his people to repent. We read that in 2 King 17 and 18.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:10:56 It's also in Isaiah 36 and 37 which the Come, Follow Me curriculum doesn't have us read because we've already read it. But I would review those chapters in your reading for next time. It happens in the middle of that. If you don't remember that

that's what's happening, you don't understand most of what Isaiah's talking about. This is his immediate context that he's trying to get them to not be destroyed and he fails with the Northern kingdom, but he succeeds with Jerusalem. Most southern kingdom destroyed, but Jerusalem is spared because they listen to Isaiah.

Hank Smith: 00:11:25 I think that's our episode with Josh Sears. So I would encourage everyone go back just a couple of episodes, if you haven't heard that one and listen to it with Josh Sears, because he goes through this. Here comes the northern kingdom of Assyria. It takes out the northern kingdom and is heading straight to the southern kingdom. And basically Isaiah and King Hezekiah stand alone between the vast Assyrian army and Jerusalem. It's an epic tale.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:11:56 Yeah. And that episode with Josh was masterful. I listen to you guys' podcast while I make breakfast in the morning. Josh was so good at painting that picture of Rabshakeh there with Isaiah's representative up on the wall and Rabshakeh down below yelling to him. He just made that applied to my life. I've taught that a hundred times and he helped me apply it to my life better than I ever had before.

Hank Smith: 00:12:17 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:12:18 Yeah. Kerry, can you say that again and explain to everybody just, if you can remember Assyrian captivity this, Babylonian captivity this and tie that with northern, southern kingdoms and because I think that would help people.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:12:32 Yeah. So during Isaiah's ministry, he starts prophesying warning the northern kingdom that Assyria is going to come and they need to repent. They don't and they are destroyed and scattered by the Assyrian kingdom. Then the Southern kingdom is also nearly destroyed by Assyria still during the reign of Hezekiah and during Isaiah's ministry. And the only reason they're spared from the Assyrians is because they listen to Isaiah. But immediately after that and you get this shift in Isaiah then about chapter 40 where... Well, really about chapter 39 where he starts to say, "Okay, your next big problem is Babylon." He gives them all the warning they would have needed to avoid being destroyed by Babylon.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:13:14 I love Jeremiah. I absolutely loved Jeremiah, but to be honest, if they'd listened to Isaiah, they wouldn't have needed Jeremiah. They wouldn't have been having those problems, but they didn't listen to Isaiah. So Jeremiah comes and Ezekiel and they

don't listen to them either, and so they do get destroyed by the Babylonians. It's about a hundred years after they're nearly destroyed by the Assyrians. They are about 115 years. They're destroyed by the Babylonians and they didn't need to be. That's the tragedy.

- John Bytheway: 00:13:39 And I feel like it helps us understand the Book of Mormon to say the Babylonian captivity is coming. "Lehi, get your family, get out of there." And also perhaps it helps us to understand why Lehi had a tough sell because Jerusalem was so miraculously protected during the Assyrian siege. And so, "Come on, Jerusalem is going to be destroyed." And they're going, "Well, probably not because last time the Lord protected us." I feel like that makes a big, "Oh, I see why perhaps people weren't believing Lehi because it didn't happen that way. Last time they reached even onto the neck, doesn't it say? But they never entered Jerusalem. So maybe they're thinking, "Oh, we're going to be saved."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:14:23 I think that's exactly why Laman and Lemuel said, "Oh, this great city Jerusalem can't be destroyed." Like, "Oh, we've seen this before. It's fine. God takes care of us." Kind of forgetting, well, you have to be obedient to the covenant to get the blessing of the covenant part. Right?
- Hank Smith: 00:14:36 The Book of Mormon, I remember years and years ago, all of a sudden the history clicked and it was finding the perfect puzzle piece that you're missing in a puzzle to see how well the Book of Mormon fits right here in history. It's a testament to the book.
- John Bytheway: 00:14:53 And the idea that Lehi wasn't scattered because of wickedness, but to preserve a part of the family of Joseph. And I love that idea. I'm going to scatter you. I'm going to move you out of there. And like you said, Hank, and so here's Nephi saying, "We've got a different area code now, but we are still house of Israel. We still have to keep the covenant and the promises. The covenant still applies to us." And it's kind of like, "Oh, this is why Nephi is so interested in Isaiah." I'm glad you said that, Hank.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:15:22 Yeah. And it's so profound. I mean, the reason Isaiah is so interested in the gathering of Israel is because he's witnessing the scattering. And put yourself in his prophetic shoes. He is one of the greatest prophets ever. And yet he's going to completely fail in getting the northern kingdom to repent. But his comfort in that, he's like Mormon where he knows, "Okay, I did my best. I did exactly what God asked me to do. It's not my fault, but I still would've liked for these people to not be destroyed." But his comfort for it is, "I know they will be gathered."

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:15:55 And one of the things he prophesied frequently about that is he says, "Well, a remnant will be preserved." So you'll have remnants of those tribes from the north that will be preserved. But one of the fulfillments of that is the remnant that's preserved by Lehi, as you said, and I think Josh explained it well in that episode you referred to. Josh Sears talks about them being scattered because of their righteousness, but that's God's method for preserving another remnant that then can be gathered. They become wicked, obviously, but they're also in the midst of being gathered.
- Hank Smith: 00:16:26 Perfect. So when we jump into these chapters today, when in that history has Assyria already taken the northern kingdom or are we pre that moment?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:16:36 Well really, for the most part before that moment, but that brings up another important point. Isaiah's book isn't fully arranged chronologically. Largely chronologically, but not completely. Chapter 1 is after that. It's after Jerusalem has been miraculously spared. We don't know that for sure, but he seems to be describing when he talks about a cottage in a vineyard. That's Jerusalem, the only city left after everything else has been destroyed. So chapter 1 seems to have been written later, but it's put at the beginning as a preface much like section one of the Doctrine and Covenants.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:17:09 This is the preface because it kind of captures the theme of the whole book. So at some point whoever's arranging that, I don't know if it's Isaiah or someone later, but someone puts that chapter at the beginning. Then you get mostly chronological, but actually some of our chapters that we read for today and some that are in that section, but we're not assigned to read them. So say chapters 13 through 20 are often called the chapters to the nations. So they're grouped together by category.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:17:36 These are where Isaiah prophesied to Moab, the Philistines, the Arabs, Assyria, Babylon and Israel and Judah and tells them all that because they're not repenting, they're going to be destroyed. But because they've been categorized and as these chapters to nations, some of them aren't fitting in the chronological order that you would expect where they're placed in the book. Some of them to Moab, or actually you can tell after or about the same time that Israel is being destroyed.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:18:02 But that doesn't happen until later chronologically in the rest of the book. You get a little bit of jumping around in there. But most of our reading, say chapter 21 through the rest is pre

destruction of Israel. Although, we can't tell exactly when that happens. It probably happens somewhere in the gap between this times reading and next time, but it's somewhere in there. And then what you'll cover for next week is that period where Judah is almost destroyed.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:18:35 But most of ours is the last moments before Israel is being scattered. And we also have to remember that Israel is scattered in stages. So Shalmaneser the third comes down and conquers them and scatters a bunch of them and 732 BC. And then they rebel. And so then you get both Sargon and Shalmaneser. Sargon and Shalmaneser come down and destroy them even more and scatter them even more. So you've got two time periods. So some of what we're reading today is probably in between those time periods, where they're in the midst of being scattered.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:19:07 I would guess Isaiah is feeling desperate about that. So we're going to see in some of the chapters, we read his strong warning to the fact that they're following bad leaders and it's causing them a problem. And also his promise that at some point God comes and relieves them from those who are oppressing them. And those are themes that are heavy on his mind because of what's going on around him.

Hank Smith: 00:19:29 Wow. All those kings you spoke of, those are Assyrian kings.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:19:33 They are Assyrian kings, yeah. They have tough sounding names, right? I mean, Shalmaneser, Tiglath-Pileser, they sound like they might come and beat you up. Right?

John Bytheway: 00:19:42 I'm glad you put it that way because that makes me think of Isaiah as a person to think he's seeing this happen all around him and how heartbreaking that must have been and would affect the way he described things because he's watching the destruction, he's trying to warn them about it. It's happening anyway. That makes you feel for Isaiah a little bit. Watching this happen and that's why I'm saying this right now.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:20:06 In fact, in some of the readings that we're not assigned to read, but they're in this kind of section in those prophecies to the nation, so chapter 15 and 16 where he is prophesying about the destruction that's coming to Moab. And remember Moab is just across the river Jordan from them. He probably knows Moabites. I would be shocked if he doesn't know Moabites. And as he talks about the vision, he sees the destruction coming to Moab, he says, "I'm undone. I'm weak in the knees. I feel sick about this."

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:20:33 You can imagine, I mean, it almost makes it emotional to think about Isaiah saying, "I know those people and I'm seeing..." Before it's happening, "I see what's going to happen to them and it's killing me. It reminds me of Nephi who says I saw, envision what happens to my people and it's terrible. It's just heartbreaking." There are a couple of times in our reading for today if you include even the chapters we're not assigned to read, but also in some of the chapters we're assigned to read where Isaiah does give us that personal touch and he says, "This is hard for me. I don't like seeing this stuff. I don't like knowing about this sorrow."
- Hank Smith: 00:21:08 It's the Book of Mormon which tells us he's doing this scattering to save the tree, right? That's Jacob 5. "I have to scatter this tree or the whole thing is going to go bad." All of a sudden I got the message of Jacob 5. "It grieveth me that I lose this tree." Over and over and over. Sometimes as I read Isaiah, I think, "Oh man, they're being punished, but really they're being saved."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:21:34 They're being saved and they're being humbled. This is one of the major messages I think of Isaiah and really the Old Testament in general. And when you get to Hosea, look for this, I think Hosea teaches this message better than any other book. But Isaiah is really powerful in this, that God humbles these people when they're not keeping the covenant in an effort to get them to keep the covenant again.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:21:54 I think this is one of the reasons. I know this seems strange to people, but for me, no book of scripture conveys the mercy of God like the Old Testament does. And it's because no matter how many times they mess up, he keeps giving them a chance. So I want you to think about this scattering of Israel that happens during Isaiah's day and it's so pertinent to our reading because it's happening as Isaiah is making these prophecies.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:22:15 But think about what it does and what it says about God. He scatters Israel because they haven't been keeping the covenant. He's trying to humble them and bring them back to him. And he will succeed in bringing them back to him. But this is a 2,500 year cycle. The scatterings in about 730 BC and the gathering begins in 1820 AD. That's 2,500 years. That's a patient God, but he's going to keep working with Israel if it takes 2,500 years. He's going to keep working with Israel. And the beauty is now that they've been scattered throughout all the world when they come back to him, they can bring the whole world with them. It's just such a beautiful plan.

Hank Smith: 00:22:56 It is. And within that 2,500 years, you have work in the spirit world then that can happen to gather Israel. On the other side of the veil, he hasn't forgotten about them either.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:23:08 Yeah. I have to say as an Israelite individual, I try and liken myself to Israel as a whole thinking that Israel messed up countless times and God is going to keep working with them even if it takes 2,500 years, gives me some comfort that it might take 2,500 years for me, but if it takes 2,500 years, fine. That's good with God. He'll be as patient as he needs to with me. As a covenant individual, that's comforting.

Hank Smith: 00:23:33 Yeah. It's helpful for parents and grandparents who think that they've got to get their child or grandchild to turn it around by next week.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:23:42 Then yet at the same time, when you say that, it also gives me a glimpse of how God must feel because I think that about either some of my kids or some of my nieces and nephews and cousins and so on, I think they'll get it turned around eventually, but I sure hate to see the misery they're going through now. I hate to see the suffering they're bringing upon themselves. And I would guess God feels that way exponentially.

Hank Smith: 00:24:04 Yeah.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:24:06 I think that the Old Testament teaches us about God's mercy more than any other book because we keep seeing how often his covenant people break the covenant and how he always gives them another chance. No matter how hard it is, no matter how much work it takes or how long it takes, God always gives them another chance and he will succeed in bringing them back. And that's incredible mercy.

John Bytheway: 00:24:30 I'm so glad you said that because I know that probably all of us hear this idea of the Old Testament God seems like angry and the New Testament God seems like this. And so for you to say that helps people to look for that. Recently, I was reading about Corianton and how Alma talks to him and he says, "I know more the justice of God, and don't excuse yourself, but let the justice of God and his mercy and his long suffering." You're missing those parts, Corianton. You're only seeing this. And then he said, "Let them have full sway in your heart." What an interesting phrase that God has all of those in a perfect harmony, his justice, his mercy, and his patience, his long suffering. And let all of that have full sway in your heart if you want to have a picture of what God is really like.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:25:22 It's a theme that moves me and is very important to me. In fact, the first thing I ever wrote was really on this topic because I'm so moved by it. It speaks to me.

Hank Smith: 00:25:33 Yeah. The manual talks about this right in the opening part of the lesson, it says that, "Here's Isaiah's assignment to go tell these powerful rulers of these mighty kingdoms that they must repent or be destroyed. It was a dangerous task, but Isaiah was fearless in his warnings to the kingdoms of his day, including Israel and Judah were bold." And then the next paragraph, John, this is what you just said, "However, Isaiah also had a message of hope, even though the prophesied destructions eventually did come upon these kingdoms, Isaiah foresaw a chance for restoration and renewal. The Lord would invite his people to return to him. He would make the parched ground to become a pool and the thirsty land spring of water. He would perform a marvelous work and wonder restoring to Israel, the blessings he had promised them."

Hank Smith: 00:26:28 Don't forget both sides. You're seeing, yes, there's a destruction that's coming because of disobedience and breaking covenants, but there's also always that chance at renewal and restoration.

John Bytheway: 00:26:42 Wonderful.

Hank Smith: 00:26:43 All right. Kerry, you ready to jump into these chapters?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:26:47 Yeah. And there's more to cover than we could possibly cover. So let's just pick a couple of verses with maybe sometimes a whole chapter of it, but sometimes a couple verses within a chapter to highlight things and see what we can talk about. One thing maybe we'll just touch on, we won't maybe even read much from it, but if we're going to talk about these kind of multiple fulfillments, I think a good example of that is in Isaiah chapter 13 and 14 when it's talking about Babylon, but it's also clear that it's talking about Satan at the exact same time.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:27:20 So this is a prophecy that Babylon who will destroy Judah at some point. And Isaiah has seen this in vision. It's going to destroy Judah, but it will be destroyed. And all these nations that it humbled. It's actually fairly short-lived empire. Really big and powerful and less than a hundred years, and it's gone. He compares that really to Satan who is powerful, but Satan's day really is short. At some point, just like all the nations that have been conquered by Babylon and they say, "We're still here and you're gone. That's kind of weird." One day we're all going to say that to Satan.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:27:59 So that's just a great example of him writing something, crafting it so carefully and so well that it fits perfectly both situations. And as a result, in many ways, Babylon becomes the symbol and still is used today as the symbol for Satan and world, and worldliness because of the way that Isaiah so carefully equates the two.
- Hank Smith: 00:28:22 The northern kingdom of Israel is going to be destroyed by Assyria around 722, 721 BC. And Isaiah is going to have a message for both of those kingdoms. The southern kingdom of Judah, which Lehi was a part of, is going to fall around 587, 586 BC by Babylon. And the Lord has a message, not only to Judah, but also to the destroyers, Babylon, as if Babylon is coming in going, "Look how powerful we are," and the Lord is saying, "Hold on a second, I have a message for you." And then this same message can apply to the adversary and his kingdom.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:29:03 That's exactly right. I don't want to complicate things too much, but I think we won't understand a few things if we don't remember that in the middle of those, in between those at about 701 BC, Judah is nearly destroyed by Assyria as well. And so some of the prophecies about Assyria are about what they're doing to Judah while some of them are about what they're doing to the kingdom of Israel. And then some of the prophecies are about what Babylon will do to Judah. All three of those time periods are addressed by Isaiah and he lives through two of them.
- Hank Smith: 00:29:33 I don't know. I find this just ironic that here comes Babylon thinking they're all tough and amazing and they destroy Judah, and there's a message. "Oh, by the way, you are a tool in God's hand." Or is it Assyria that he tells that to? "You are a tool in God's hand. Don't be thinking you're high and mighty just because you took this kingdom."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:29:57 And all of this is so transient when they think that they're so powerful and yet in comparison with God, it's just a blip in time. I was actually thinking about this just before I came here. I met a person who knew my dad and he was talking about a guy who was a big bully there, and so on. And then how he was tough enough to beat this bully and so on. This is a guy who at this point is 87 years old and was having a hard time walking over to meet me. So these guys who were all so tough in their day are having a hard time moving along. And that's my future too, right? I mean, we're all going to get to...
- John Bytheway: 00:30:29 Yeah.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:30:30 It's the same thing with empires. We all think we're so big and bad at some point and Satan is the [inaudible 00:30:38] version of this. He really thinks he's big and bad, but the day is coming where he is just gone and the only thing that's going to last are things that are connected with God.

John Bytheway: 00:30:46 I saw a T-shirt in Jerusalem. It was a list of all of the kingdoms that attacked Israel and failed. Have you seen that one?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:30:55 Yeah, I love that T-shirt.

John Bytheway: 00:30:56 Yeah. And there's my favorite description of the different Jewish feast many of which still practice today was, "They tried to kill us. They failed. Let's eat."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:31:08 And that T-shirt you had, if I remember at the summary at the bottom, it's something like nations that fight against God or Israel or God's covenant people, or something like that, nations that fight against God, zero God, 14 or something.

John Bytheway: 00:31:21 Yeah, something like that.

Hank Smith: 00:31:21 What chapter do you want to start with?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:31:25 I'd like to start with one that again is in the range of chapters we cover this week, but it's not actually in the assigned reading, but it has some things in it that are just important enough that I think it's key to understand a couple of things. So if we went to chapter 22, we won't look at every verse in here, but I want to look at a couple of verses that I think are really important. And we can also see just some of Isaiah's amazing poetic abilities.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:31:48 So it starts out in 22:1, he says, "The burden of the valley of vision. What aileth thee now that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops? Thou art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, joyous city, thy slain men are not slain with the sword nor dead in battle." So let's think about that, the valley of vision. We typically think of this as the Kidron Valley. And the reason for this to some degree is because there are a number of visions where you see Jerusalem is seen. They know about what's going to happen in the future in Jerusalem. So there are a lot of visions that surround that area that people have had about what will happen there, but it's also a play on words because these are people who should have a vision.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:32:28 Remember this phrase from Moses where there is no vision the people perish. They should have a vision, but they've lost their

vision. So now all they care about is going up on top of their roofs and having a party. They're no longer having the kind of eternal vision or a long term perspective that all they care about is partying and God lets them know that actually they are going to have people who die with a sword and so on.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:32:50

But both when Assyria comes, when Babylon comes later, when Rome comes against Jerusalem, the majority of people that die, die from famine because they lay siege to the city. They're not slain by the sword or in battle. They're slain because they're starving. And these are the same people who are actually up there having a big banquet on their rooftop. And they're about to starve to death because they don't have the kind of vision that they should. Wonderful poetic stuff.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:33:15

Let's continue with that idea just a little bit by skipping over to verse 7 where he says, "It shall come to pass at that thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves array at the gate." So he is continuing this play on words with the valley of vision. But what's the vision that Isaiah's seen? He's seen the Assyrian army and he probably sees the Babylonian army too, coming against them.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:33:39

And in the verse before it, he talks about Elam and Kir who we know were countries that both of those countries had conquered and they forced them in their army and they came to battle against them. Specifically we know with Babylon that those two countries were there laying siege to Jerusalem. He's saying, "You want to talk about a vision. Now it's a nightmare. And the nightmare is that you wake up and you look out and you're surrounded by the biggest armies in the world. And you've got a problem." And then he goes on to warn them.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:34:06

I think this is so important because this is one of the places where he gives a warning to Jerusalem and Hezekiah that makes a difference. So let's read this. This makes a huge difference. We're going to go to verse 9. You've seen also the breaches in the city of David that are many, and you gather together the waters of the lower pool. And you have numbered the houses of Jerusalem and the houses have you broken down to fortify the wall. You also made a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:34:35

Now, we're going to pause there. We're going to read the second part of that verse in a second, but he's talking about what Hezekiah has done. So historically when the northern kingdom was conquered and destroyed, it was partially because of what you talked about last time with Jason Combs and what's

happening in Isaiah chapter 7 through 9, where, A, has this problem that the northern kingdom and Syria want them to join them in battle against Assyria and Isaiah warns him. He says, "Don't do that. Don't go to Assyria either. Just do nothing, repent and let God take care of it."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:35:06

But he chooses to listen to the world instead. So he goes to Assyria and says, "Come help me." Assyria helps him. But as a result, the kingdom of Judah becomes a vassal to Assyria. And now they have to send huge amounts of taxes and they have to send men and women to be their servants and their slaves and to be in their army. So their children, their teenagers are going to tribute every year. And after a while, this becomes too burdensome. They just can't keep doing it.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:35:32

So Hezekiah is going to rebel. He's going to withhold that tribute. That's the form of the rebellion. He's withholding the tribute. So as he's getting ready to do this, he says, "Okay. Well, I know Assyria will come against me. What do I need to do to get ready?" So he does a number of things. One of them is he's going to make an alliance with Egypt. Isaiah is going to get after him for that. We're going to come back to that in a minute. But the other thing is he's going to prepare Jerusalem. He's going to get Jerusalem ready for a siege.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:35:59

Now, he's had a lot of people move into Jerusalem because they were refugees from the northern kingdom. So he has to expand the city and the wall anyway. So he's going to repair the breaches in the wall of the city of David. So the city of David is not Bethlehem. Luke is the only person that refers to it. Bethlehem is the city of David. And that's just because Luke was a Greek or didn't know anything about what was going on there.

Hank Smith: 00:36:18

Okay.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:36:20

Every other time you read city of David, it's Jerusalem, all right? But I don't want to ruin your Christmas sims. They're still nice. But he's talking about Jerusalem here, the city of David. Hezekiah has seen the breaches in the wall and he's going to fix them. And he also is going to build a huge wall to encompass the new inhabitants of the city that there wasn't room for them in the city, so they built outside of the city. He's going to encompass them behind this huge wall and archeologically we found this wall. It's called the broad wall because it is so wide. It's also really tall, but it is so wide.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:36:50

And note this part where he said, "The houses you've broken down to fortify the wall." You can go into Jerusalem today. If

you're out by the Hurva Synagogue and just behind there, you'll see where they've got this place, where you can still see the remains of the wall. And you can see, it's one of the places where it's built on top of a house. It goes right through a house. It's got to be one of the houses that Isaiah's talking about in this verse.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:37:11

Isaiah is a little unhappy about it. He says, "You're tearing stuff down and doing all these things to try and fortify the city on your own." And he also talks about gathering the water so that the Assyrians won't have it, but they can have water inside themselves. This is when they built what's called Hezekiah's tunnel. It was probably started by his father, Ahaz. Archeologically it seems we've recently been uncovering clues that it was started by Ahaz, but it's finished in Hezekiah's day and he probably does most of the work. We don't know for sure, but it's probably mostly in Hezekiah's day.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:37:37

So we call it Hezekiah's tunnel where they build this tunnel to take it from the spring of Gihon. And instead of having it go outside the city like it had up to that point, he's going to tunnel all the way underneath the city and bring it down to the bottom of the city where they'll create the pool of Siloam that later Jesus will send a blind man to wash his eyes at.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:37:54

So that's the tunnel and that he's talking about there. So all of those are things that Hezekiah is doing to get ready for this battle. But I want you to now look at the last part of verse 11. After he says, you've built this ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool, that's Hezekiah's tunnel we're talking about, but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect under him that fashioned it long ago.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:38:20

See, initially, Hezekiah is following in his father's footsteps. He's trusting in the power of man and the world, aligning himself with Egypt, building up these fortifications and he's not turning to God. He's not trusting in God. Isaiah is warning him here, and thank goodness Hezekiah listens. Now tradition holds it that Hezekiah, Ahaz, and it might be Isaiah, and one of the kings is a cousin with Isaiah and that actually Hezekiah may have married Isaiah's daughter, so Isaiah might be his father-in-law.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:38:52

That's all tradition. We don't know if it's true or not, but if so, then it's nice that Hezekiah he can get access to Hezekiah And he listens to him. But one way or the other, Hezekiah listens and he repents. Now, it doesn't mean he stops doing these things or that these things are a problem if you're turning to God. In fact, an Egyptian army does come and that's what draws the Assyrian

army away from Jerusalem. And then God smites that army. But the Egyptian army did play a role in the saving of Jerusalem, but it wouldn't have, or at least it wouldn't have been successful if they hadn't started turning to God. These walls in this water help them, but they wouldn't have, and they wouldn't have been enough if they hadn't turned to God.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:39:30

And that's the message that Isaiah is trying to get to Ahaz, Hezekiah and everyone who would ever listen to him start trusting in God. Forget about what the world is teaching you and trust in God. I'm so glad Hezekiah listened.

Hank Smith: 00:39:46

It reminds me of President Hinckley used to say, "I pray as if everything relies on God. I work as though everything relies on me." So yeah, build your tunnels. Go get the water the way you want to get it. But you better be putting just as much effort into your reliance and relationship with God.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:40:04

And if they hadn't repented and gotten rid of their idolatry, all of these things wouldn't have worked.

Hank Smith: 00:40:10

Wouldn't have mattered.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:40:10

But because they did get rid of the idolatry and they renewed the covenant and kept it, they worked.

John Bytheway: 00:40:14

And in the war chapters, in the Book of Mormon, Captain Moroni does this. It's get your spiritual act together. Now, that we've done that let's build fortifications and make swords and stuff like that. It's really interesting to me that even in a war, you don't make your spiritual life a back burner thing. Well, we're too busy for that right now. We got to make our swords and our fortifications. No, no, no. That's job. You got to get your act together, job one spiritually. And then don't leave the other undone, but get your act together first. And then we'll see that here.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:40:46

In fact, as you say that, it reminds me of Moroni's son, Moronihah, who, after they lose a whole bunch of land to the Lamanites works on getting everyone to repent. And then it says, once they had repented, he felt like he could start to go from city to city and start to retake cities. And he only gets half of them, but he wouldn't even try until he'd gotten the people to get their spiritual lives in order.

John Bytheway: 00:41:07

Yeah, job one.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:41:08 Let's keep going in chapter 22, if it's all right. We'll just jump forward a couple of verses, but we get some really interesting stuff happening just after this. Verse 15 is where we want to start. After God is warning them that they need to repent, that they're relying on the wrong kinds of things, they're so worried about what the world is telling them. He gives us an example of this and he is going to do something specifically about it. So let's go to verse 15, "Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, 'Go get thee under this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house.'"
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:41:40 So Shebna is a person who holds a very important position. He's the steward of the king's house and the treasurer. Being steward of the king's house basically means he is the one who does everything the king wants to have done. So he is like the chancellor or something like this. He's the guy who actually gets it done. Very important, very powerful.
- John Bytheway: 00:42:00 Kind of like an executive secretary.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:42:03 Yeah, that's exactly right. I'm with you on that. Verse 16 is what he says. "What hast thou here? And whom hast thou here that that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?" So his complaint is what are you doing? You're putting all your wealth into a huge sepulcher that you're carving out for yourself. And interestingly, we've actually found the lentil over a big sepulcher that says that Shebna so-and-so. I mean, we've found the sepulcher he's talking about, and that lentil is now in a museum.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:42:35 But you see his point here. What you're doing is ridiculous in two ways. One, you're so concerned with having a big sumptuous tomb. You're spending all of your time and your resources and your wealth on that when you're about to be destroyed. And two, who cares about the tomb, right? It's transient. Your body's there for a little while. It molds and you'll never really enjoy it. What are you thinking? He's all concerned. He's so concerned with all the wrong things, with transient unimportant things that the world has told him to be concerned about.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:43:04 So this is what Isaiah says is going to happen to him as a result, verse 17 and 18. "Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity and will surely cover thee. He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country. There shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the

shame of thy Lord's house. And I will drive thee from thy station and from thy state shall he pull thee down?"

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:43:30 So he's basically saying when Assyria comes, because you haven't gotten them to repent, you've been spending your time on the world's ideas instead of my ideas, you're going to go into captivity in Assyria and you're going to die there. You're not going to get to use this tomb anyway. And so as a result, I'm going to remove you from your station right now, because you're not doing what you should be doing. You're spending your time on the wrong things.
- Hank Smith: 00:43:52 Talk about being caught up in the thick of thin things. I mean-
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:43:56 That's exactly right.
- Hank Smith: 00:43:57 You've got bigger problems and you're focused on, "Well, I want to make sure my grave is pretty."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:44:03 Yeah. And the irony, okay, go ahead, but you're not going to get use it anyway.
- Hank Smith: 00:44:09 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:44:11 I just like the phrase violently turn and tossing like a ball into a large country. There's a sports sound to that thing right there.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:44:19 Yeah, that's right. He's just going to bounce, pass him over into Assyria, right?
- Hank Smith: 00:44:24 There's a lot of application there, Kerry, don't you think?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:44:27 Oh, yeah.
- Hank Smith: 00:44:27 Why are you spending your time on this for? There are real battles out there. Your children, your grandchildren are fighting real battles and here you are concerned with whatever you're concerned with, what your Instagram feed looks like.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:44:41 And I think we can all take a moment right now and ask ourselves, what is it that I'm spending so much of my time and energy on because the world has told me that this is important and I really should be putting my time and resources into something else. There's got to be some way for all of us that that's happening right now. It's not an if question, it is a how question? How is it happening for us? As we're talking, I'm thinking of some things I can do differently.

Hank Smith: 00:45:07 Yeah, me too.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:45:09 Now, we have an unspoken principle in the transition that's going to happen here, but I think it's worth talking about. You may probably remember chapter one and right before the famous verses, verse 18, where he says, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." You get verse 16 where he says, "You've got to quit doing the evil stuff." And verse 17 where he says, "You've got to start doing the good stuff." And the transition between them, the last little line of verse 16 and the first line of verse 17 is cease to do evil. That's the end of 16. And then first line of 17, learn to do well.

Hank Smith: 00:45:43 That's in Isaiah 1.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:45:45 This is a principle... Yeah, Isaiah 1:16 and 17. And then right after that, he's going to say repent and we can get you all cleaned up here. Though it's red, it can become white. I can't tell you how many times as a bishop I've used that phrase that cease to do evil, learn to do well because when you're trying to stop a bad behavior, you have to replace it with a good one. If not, you've got this vacuum and you slip back into the bad behavior. You've got to replace it with a good one. So that cease to do evil, learn to do well is profound. And that's what he's going to do for Judah here. He's going to get rid of Shebna and he's going to put in someone really good in his place.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:46:21 So let's read what he does, verse 20, "And it shall come to pass in that day that I will call my servant, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah." This is the same Eliakim that when you were talking with Josh Sears and Rabshakeh came to the wall and was yelling up there, Isaiah's major representative as Eliakim. This is the guy. This is how he got into that position, that he would be doing that. And I will clothe him with thy robes. So he is talking to Shebna and he's saying, "I'm taking away your robe. I will clothe him with thy robe and strengthen him with thy girdle. I will commit thy government into his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem to the house of Judah and the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so he shall open and none shall shut and he shall shut and none shall open."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:47:09 So let's think about that. He's going to give him the robes of office that Shebna wears. The description of his robes are very similar to the description of the robes that Aaron would receive. And you went over that with Matt Gray, I remember where you've got this priestly robe and then a girdle. And then he's got the brass ephod. But coming up from that, that on the shoulders are insignias of power or authority. And that's what

he's describing is there's some kind of way that this person in this very important position dresses where he has the robe and the girdle that is close to a priestly robe and girdle. And there's an insignia that goes on his shoulder that says that he has the key to the whole government.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:47:49

Underneath the king, he does everything. By the way, this is the kind of image that Isaiah must have been referring to when back in chapter 9, when he said, "And the government will I lay upon his shoulders." And you can probably hear Handel's Messiah singing that. But that's the image that they're drawing on. And we see the sealing imagery in verse 22, where he says, "He'll open and none shall shut and shut none shall open." That's again, drawing on priesthood power allegory. But what he's saying is he'll be so powerful that besides the king, if he says something is going to happen, no one can make it not happen. And if he says something shouldn't happen, no one can make it happen.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:48:23

So you see these are illusions to Christ. This is about Eliakim, but these are illusions to Christ. And that's strengthened when we get to verse 23. "And I will Fasten him as a nail in a sure place, and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:48:52

So in the original context, this is still talking about Eliakim and there are a couple of symbols, I think with this nail in a sure place. One is that I'm giving him this office so securely it's like, I fastened this with a nail that can't come out. That's how much I'm putting him in this office and no one is taking him from it. He's going to fulfill this office so well that it will make his father's house glorious. It gives glory to his father and his family name, and he's going to be the most glorious of any of his family because of this.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:49:23

So that's one of the fulfillments or one of the symbols. But there's a second symbol. In at least in Mesopotamia. And so this is a near eastern neighbor culture with which Israel would be very familiar, and they may have done this in Israelite places as well, and we just maybe haven't found the archeological examples, but in Mesopotamia, in a temple or in some of the palaces and a couple really important houses, they would symbolically take a big clay nail and they would write the terms of the treaty or the covenant. So the agreement with God that you would serve the God of that temple or the agreement with this king, you would write it on that clay nail and you would

then sink it into that temple or that house. And that symbolically says this temple functions and is built upon this covenant agreement.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:50:10 That's a nail in a sure place. So I think there's some symbolism here as well, that the covenant with the house of David, this Davidic Covenant is going to function here. I will save you like I promised I would because of what Eliakim will do. And what does Eliakim do? He works with Hezekiah when Hezekiah gets his people to get rid of their idolatry, repent, renew their covenant and serve God so that they'll be miraculously spared.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:50:37 That's the original context. But when I think of that, it helps me understand all the better how this applies to Christ because Christ is also a fulfillment of someone who brings glory to his father's throne and has the government upon his shoulders and has the key to the house of David and is fastened with a nail in a sure place.

Hank Smith: 00:50:58 Wow.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:50:58 And gets us to get rid of our idolatry and repent, and renew our covenant so that we can serve God and thus be saved. I understand that better about Christ because I see what's happening with Eliakim came here.

John Bytheway: 00:51:13 So good.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:51:14 I should also note that verse 25, the last verse in the chapter is a little hard to understand. First of all, the Hebrew of it is a little bit weird and secondly, Joseph Smith tells us no one understands this verse. So I'm okay that I don't understand it. I fit in that category of the no one. I don't have a lot to say about that verse, but the verses before that, I feel like we can understand fairly well.

John Bytheway: 00:51:34 There's a footnote for our listeners, footnote 20A, it says Eliakim shall replace Shebna. Moreover, the symbolic name Eliakim in ensuing verses becomes representative of the Messiah, the Savior, especially verse 23 through 25. The name means God shall cause to arise. So that's one of those where I want to mark the footnote as well as the verses.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:51:58 Agreed.

John Bytheway: 00:51:59 When we did Ezra chapter 9, verse 8 says this, "And now for a little space, grace has been showed from the Lord, our God to

leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes and give us a little reviving in our bondage." That's an interesting phrase, a nail in his holy place, but the footnote 8B takes us to Isaiah 22 verses 23 and 25, which we just read. So that was ones I wanted to tie together.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:52:39 And it makes me think that they may have done this in the same way we were talking about with those Mesopotamian temples, that they may have had a nail in the temple. And it's not a real nail that holds things together, because it's made of clay, but there may have been something that had the terms of the covenant on it that is placed in the temple because the temple is so much about the covenant with the house of Israel today and in their day.
- Hank Smith: 00:53:02 So I just want to make sure I understand that correctly, Kerry. There's a symbolic nail placed into the temple with the terms of the covenant and that would be this nail in the sure place.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:53:13 And it's the nail that makes everything sure. The covenant is what makes it sure. And that's because Christ makes it possible for the covenant to be fulfilled. And so you can see the symbolism going back and forth between the covenant and Christ and the nail and what Christ suffers and so on. I think it's just a beautiful interweaving of language and symbols.
- Hank Smith: 00:53:34 Yeah. Definitely one of those connect the Old and New Testaments together.
- John Bytheway: 00:53:39 This is why Isaiah was brilliant. There could be a present fulfillment and there could be a future fulfillment of so many of the things he said, or maybe even multiple fulfillments.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:53:53 Yeah, for sure. Multiple fulfillments. And again, I think if you understand the original context, usually you understand the other fulfillments all the better. Like I said when you understand a symbol, you need to look at the literal symbol first and then you can understand all of the ways it can be applied. If you understand the original context, you understand better all of the other ways it can be applied.
- Hank Smith: 00:54:15 Right. Don't jump automatically to the second level or third level. Stay in his time and his time period. The things they are dealing with in their day because they're amazing.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:54:30 Yeah. I mean, that's one of the reasons why I wrote the commentary I did. I love all the commentaries that our friends and colleagues have written and they're wonderful. And so I thought, "Well, do I really need another one?" But one of the things that I felt like is that we so often, even in all those commentaries jumped to the latter-day fulfillment and don't spend much time on the original context and that hampers our ability to really understand it. So I tried to spend a lot of time, not as much time as we could and not in every verse, but a lot of time on the original context to help us understand the history, the geography and the culture and how they would've taken it. And then we can take that next step.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:55:06 So I try and do that, have the next step as well. I don't do it for every verse because the book would be too big, but I feel like that's something as members of the church, we can do better this year than ever before because we've paid the price to understand the history better this year than ever before. So we should be able to get more out of that original context so that we can then get more out of how it applies to us.
- Hank Smith: 00:55:28 That's wonderful.
- John Bytheway: 00:55:29 Well, I think this is one of the reasons that Jesus would say great are the words of Isaiah, because he pulls this off. He speaks of things in one time and it applies in another time. And you're like, "Whoa, how did he do that?" I've had students, "Well, I still don't understand why great are the words of Isaiah?" Well look, what he was able to do here. I think for me, the one that is amazing is he can describe the coming Assyrian army with a army type intent and a future army of missionaries in the latter-days. And he uses the same words and it works both ways and you're like, "How did he do that?"
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:56:11 He's impressive. I can't tell you how many times. I mean I've studied Isaiah a lot. I mean I've written about every single verse. I've studied him intensely. I've taught classes in Isaiah for quite a while now. And still every time I read him, I'll think, "Oh, I never noticed that. Well, that's good. That's really good."
- Hank Smith: 00:56:30 That's why Jesus, whenever he sees Isaiah, I'm sure he says, "Love your book." Whenever it seems like Jesus wants to quote scripture, he quotes Isaiah.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:56:39 Yeah. Isaiah and Psalms are where he goes the most and then do them.

Hank Smith: 00:56:42 Yeah, right.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:56:44 Well, what if we jump ahead and we're just going to kind of summarize one of the things I think can be helpful in understanding Isaiah is understanding sections or chunks of Isaiah that work together. In fact, that's another clue I'd love to give all your audience. Often. I can't tell you how often in my commentary I wrote this. At the first verse of one chapter, I would say this just continues the thought that was in the last chapter, but we see a chapter heading and-

Hank Smith: 00:57:08 We do a memory wipe.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:57:10 Yeah. But so often it's like say, six, chapters that are really all one thought. They just go together. Right?

John Bytheway: 00:57:17 Yeah.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:57:18 And if you can see those kind of chunks and realize, "Okay, these go together and here's really a break and then these go together." I think that's really useful. So I would say chapters 24 through 27 are a cohesive unit or

John Bytheway: 00:57:29 One thought, oh wow.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:57:31 Yeah. It's worth looking at in that way. So Isaiah's finished prophesying to all of the nations and now he's going to start to really focus on Judah again. We get this unit that ties together where some people actually think that 24th or 27 was so cohesive. They feel like it's written by a different person at a later time period and that someone just stuck it in here. Theologically, I don't have a problem with that. I'm fine if there was some other inspired writer that people said, "Oh, this is like Isaiah. I put it in Isaiah's book. If it's inspired, fine with me."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:58:02 I'm not convinced by that because it seems so like Isaiah, the themes work with Isaiah. I think it's just a really cohesive unit. So to me it's probably more likely like that at some point in time, probably, maybe just as Israel's starting to be scattered or something like that, and he's almost maybe panicked about Judah and wanting to save Judah, something like that. He writes either a sermon or a couple of sermons together in his mind and they become these chapters.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:58:28 I don't know if that's how it really worked, but I would guess it's something like that. And the major theme here is that while Judah will need to be humbled, they can be rescued and will be

rescued by God and be able to rejoice as a result. So these in many ways are "I know you're going to be humbled, but there's reason to rejoice because God will deliver you" section of chapters. Now, that's a theme that's all throughout Isaiah and we get it again and again, but it's particularly tied in these sections.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:59:03 In fact, I would say covenant and redemption are the two most prevalent themes in the Book of Isaiah. And of course redemption comes because of God's servant who is primarily Christ, but also other servants. But Christ primarily is the servant that gives us redemption. And so covenant and redemption are what are so important to him. And that's really strong in this area. These chapters, 24 through 27, they're sometimes called the little apocalypse because they're about this idea of you will have bad things happen to you, but don't worry, God will relieve the oppression and you'll be delivered and have joy. This actually has some really important latter-day fulfillments, right? Apocalyptic fulfillments. We know it's going to happen at the end of time.
- Hank Smith: 00:59:45 Kerry, so if I'm placing this in my timeline, this is when Assyria has taken the Northern kingdom and is coming into the southern kingdom and you're thinking it's over for us.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:59:58 Yeah. I don't know how precisely we can place it. I think it's likely either in between 730 and 720 when Israel has started to be scattered, but it's not completely scattered, but Isaiah can see, "Oh, Judah's next." Or it might be in between 720 and say 700 when the northern kingdom has been scattered and Isaiah see that Judah is next. So it's somewhere in there. I really get the sense that he says, "All right. We're starting to see what this looks like when it happens. I don't like it and I really want my people to miss it." But he knows it's going to happen and he wants to give them reason to rejoice nonetheless. Right?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:00:38 Like Nephi who says, "Okay, I know my people get destroyed, but Isaiah gives me reason to have comfort." Eventually it gets good. As bad as it is, eventually it gets good.
- Hank Smith: 01:00:49 That's just a lesson in itself right there. Sermon in a sentence as bad as it is, eventually it gets good.
- John Bytheway: 01:00:57 I was going to ask you before who divided these into chapters? When did that actually happen when a cohesive thought was broken up into chapters that we use today?

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:01:06 For some prophets, we don't know how their word gets put into writing. Someone like Amos who was out working behind the flock and so on probably wasn't even literate. And what he prophesied, someone else probably had to write down. Jeremiah was literate, but we know he had a scribe that wrote his words down. With Isaiah, I suspect Isaiah did his own writing because it's probably too complex for anyone else to do and do well. He makes up words. He does all sorts of stuff.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:01:35 I'm not exaggerating. He does make up words, making plays on words and he just kind of makes stuff up. In fact, we'll look at some examples in a minute. I don't think anyone else could probably pull off writing the stuff that Isaiah writes. He probably has to put his own words down because no one else was like, "Wait, how did he say that again?"
- Hank Smith: 01:01:50 Elder Maxwell.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:01:52 Yeah. That's exactly right. Yeah. How would you like to try and get all of Elder Maxwell's phrases down just perfectly if he does it all orally and it's your job to get it in a book. Right? Good luck. The question you're asking is after it's written down, how is it divided? And I don't know. Did Isaiah do some of that himself? Maybe. Or is it some people later who have just collected all of his writings and they're putting it to...? And the answer is, we don't know. We really don't know.
- John Bytheway: 01:02:16 What about when we found the dead sea scrolls and Isaiah was there? Were they divided?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:02:21 Yeah, they're pretty much how we have them. But I mean that's 200 BC, so that's 500 years after this. So that great Isaiah scroll is one of the oldest scrolls that they had in the dead sea scrolls. So 500 years later, at least it was already pretty close to the same forum we have it in.
- Hank Smith: 01:02:40 Fascinating.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:02:41 So let's just start out on chapter 25 and just read a few of these verses and then we can talk about it. We'll start in verse 1. "O Lord, thou art my God." Now I'm just going to stop right here and say, I talked about Abrahamic covenant language. One of the phrases that is so much about the Abrahamic covenant is that God is our God and we are his people, right? That's just said to Abraham. It's a consistent part of it. So really anytime you see the phrase, my people or the phrase my God, it should be a little clue we're dealing with covenant language. So that's

how this starts out. "O Lord, that art my God." This is a covenant keeper who's saying this.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:03:22 It's Isaiah of course, but it's also Isaiah I think speaking for anyone who's really keeping the covenant. "O Lord, thou art my God. I will exalt thee. I will praise thy name for thou hast done wonderful things thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." We're going to acknowledge how amazing and wonderful God is. It's almost Psalmlike that verse.
- Hank Smith: 01:03:43 It is, yeah.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:03:45 "For thou hast made of a city and heap of a defended city a ruin. A palace of strangers to be no city. It shall never be built." Now when I think of praising God, the first thing I think of is not, "Man, you destroyed a lot of cities. That was so cool." But for someone who is being attacked by foreign armies again and again, and again-
- John Bytheway: 01:04:10 Good point.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:04:11 ... this is what you think of. You can take whole cities and lay them waste. By this point, maybe Isaiah's thinking about cities in the northern kingdom that have been destroyed. Verse 3, "Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee." I think he's saying, "We're going to glorify you and Assyria should be afraid." But of course this is going to have applications in all sorts of ways. It's not just in his own day. We should think, "Okay. Well, the way Nephi would put this if he's thinking of his vision that he has in 1 Nephi 14 is that the children of the lamb of God, the church of the lamb of God and the great and abominable church, he's going to see it in those terms.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:04:52 There are all sorts of ways we can see it. Now, verse four is beautiful, I think. "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress." This sounds like something I heard in the introduction. "A refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shall bring down the noise of strangers as the heat in a dry place. Even the heat with the shadow of a cloud, the branch of the terrible one shall be brought down low." So those who oppress us are going to be brought down just like you can see heat falling. "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things."

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:05:33 So note how he keeps contrasting these images. You're getting rid of our oppressors and you're taking care of us, which is exactly what the covenant promises will happen. So verse 5 is the getting rid of the oppressors. Verse 6, and the mountain that's typically referring, not always, but typically referring to the temple or at least the temple mount. So there, the Lord will make a feast of fat things, the feast of wines on the lees, fat things full of marrow of wines on the lees well refined, right? So he is saying, "You're giving us the best of the best. We are going to have a fantastic feast here."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:06:04 And now we're getting to the part, I really want to focus on, verse 7 and 8. "And he will destroy in this mountain, the face of the covering cast over all people and the veil that is spread over all nations." That's probably supposed to be read a bunch of ways, but at least one of the important ways I read this is the thing that separates us from God is going to be destroyed.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:06:22 Again, it's in this mountain, that's the temple. And so there's a veil that's spread over all nations, but it's covering us and separating us from God. So I think that's one of the interpretations. I'm sure there are others, but one of the interpretations would be here when we have this great feast, when God has really taken care of us, there's not going to be something that separates us.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:06:42 Now, look at verse 8. "He will swallow up death in victory and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." That is one of my favorite lines in all of scripture. "He will swallow up death in victory and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth for the Lord hath spoken it." That is just so wonderful to think of God wiping our tears away.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:07:13 Death is conquered. So it's not just Assyria that's conquered. In this case, Assyria is standing as a symbol for death itself and Christ or Jehovah is defeating death and wiping tears away from us. Verse 9. "And it shall be said in that day lo, this is our God." There's that covenant imagery again. "We have waited for him and he will save us. This is the Lord. We have waited for him. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Just beautiful images of how all oppression, every kind of oppression will be ended and God will save us and wipe away our tears.
- John Bytheway: 01:08:00 Please join us for part two of this podcast.



- John Bytheway: 00:00:01 Welcome to part two of Isaiah 13 through 35 with Dr. Kerry Muhlestein.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:00:08 I'd like to just jump a little bit to chapter 27. 24 through 27, each chapter in some ways says the same thing as the next chapter. It's just this theme that he keeps repeating, but he does it so beautifully. I just want to look at verse one of chapter 27.
- John Bytheway: 00:00:25 That's really powerful, beautiful stuff, and I love that you said it's not just Assyrians and Babylonians and New Testament Romans that are our enemy. I'm going to swallow up death.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:00:36 Let's think for a moment. My students often feel uncomfortable, and we encounter this all over in scriptures but especially in Isaiah, they feel uncomfortable when they read something about God destroying cities or being violent. There are times in Isaiah where he says, "You're violent." They feel uncomfortable with that, but we have to couple it with verse eight and nine. I think chapter 27:1 really helps us with this. This is a phrase that a lot of my students are not comfortable with, but I rejoice in.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:01:04 So chapter 27:1, "In that day, the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent, and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Then verse two, "And that day sing ye unto her a vineyard of red wine." He's singing because God has a sore and great and strong sword that he punishes with.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:01:30 Most of us don't like to think of Christ or Jehovah going around with a great big sword, but we like to think of him having a hanky in his hand that can wipe away all the tears from off our faces, but the reason he can wipe away the tears from off our faces is because he had a sword and he killed leviathan with it. Leviathan is this great serpent that probably isn't real, but it represents chaos and death and hell and everything else, and it's because Christ is a divine warrior, it is because he will destroy all oppression that he can wipe our tears away. There's no wiping our tears away if he doesn't have a sword in the other hand.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:02:08 I think we need to understand that. To some degree, there's a great comfort. We all have something that's oppressing us. There are Assyrians all over in our life, and it might be pornography. It might be depression and/or anxiety. It might be that I'm never going to get married. It might be physical things that are afflicting us. Whatever it is, we all have an Assyrian in our life, but what we can be sure of is that Christ can conquer every single one of those because he has a sword that is sore and great and strong, and after he conquers those oppressions, then he can wipe our tears away.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:02:44 That image is as moving to me as anything anywhere in scripture. It speaks to me as I watch my children struggle with things. It speaks to me as I watch my students and my ward members struggle with things. As I struggle with things, I rejoice in knowing that Jehovah has a sword, and one day that sword will conquer and lay waste to everything that is hard, and then he'll just turn around and wipe my tears away.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:15 Oh, how great the goodness of our God who prepares a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster. Might even say leviathan there, right? That monster death and hell.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:03:28 Remember, Jacob's in the middle of teaching about Isaiah chapters when he says that. I have no doubt he's got this stuff in his mind.
- John Bytheway: 00:03:34 Yeah. He's just taught in 2 Nephi seven and eight or Isaiah chapters, and then I have called nine the Os and the woes chapters because at first, there's all this, "O, the greatness of our God," and then it becomes, "But woe unto ..."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:03:47 You can see it's this same thing. It's this same theme that God is great, and as a result, he'll get rid of all the bad stuff and the Os are the God is great, and the woes are all the bad stuff he's going to get rid of. We just need to make sure, and this is a real lesson, you better make sure you're on the right side of that sword. If you are oppressing God's people, you're in trouble. I know people who feel like they're actually doing God's work, but in reality, they're oppressing God's people. They're fighting against the prophet. They're saying, "Well, the prophet doesn't see the things the right way. This is the right way and please listen to me on this," but when they're doing that, they're really oppressing God's people. Oh, you're going to end up on the wrong side of that sword. If you're on the wrong side of the prophet, you're on the wrong side of that sword.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:04:31 So then you're on the woes part, and that's exactly what he says in 2 Nephi 9, "Well, you're learned, and so you think you know

what you're doing, but you're not listening to God." So you get the woes instead of the Os. I would say that 2 Nephi 9, which is Jacob's commentary on the Isaiah chapters he's been reading, but I think it's a commentary on this stuff. He has this in his mind, I think, firmly in his mind as he talks about the things, conquering death and hell and so on.

Hank Smith: 00:04:56 Yeah. Kerry, you mentioned earlier the idea of patience. Back in 25 verse nine, "It shall be said in that day, 'Lo, this is our God. We have waited for him and he will save us. This is the Lord. We have waited for him. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'" So there is an element you can see that Isaiah is saying, "Be patient. Let this plan play out."

John Bytheway: 00:05:22 Boy, you know what that reminds me of, Hank? Just had an experience at the pool of Bethesda this last year. I read a talk from President Packer about those who are still waiting for the moving of the water. Oh, it's a beautiful talk about those who take care of those who have disabilities of whatever kind and how they're still waiting for the moving of the water like the man who waited for 38 years when Jesus came to see him. It's a beautiful talk. If you want to, our listeners want to go find that, but a lot of life is waiting, isn't it?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:05:57 Yeah. I know I and I know lots of other people in this situation where we have loved ones who are struggling with depression or anxiety or something like that. You just want them to be healed right now, and it's breaking your heart that they're not healed right now, but to some degree, we are just waiting, knowing that at some point that healing happens, that beast of an oppressor is going to meet the Savior's sword and then we'll rejoice, but it's hard to wait.

John Bytheway: 00:06:29 Beautifully put. Thank you.

Hank Smith: 00:06:31 Speaking of this, we got a wonderful email, and he said, "I just wanted to express my gratitude to you and brother, Bytheway, for the Come Follow Me episodes. Last October, my daughter, one of your former students, was killed in a car accident with her best friend. I am still devastated and shocked that this is our new life to live without her. My wife and I have four other children to raise and we are doing the best we can in the situation we live in. I find so much strength with these podcasts. I just wanted to let you know how grateful I am that you're doing them for all of us. These episodes have really helped me through the darkest year of my life."

Hank Smith: 00:07:10 That really is our hope here is keep waiting. Like you said, Kerry, we just want so badly for now, we want to be reunited with

loved ones that have passed away now. We want healing now. Isaiah 25:9, "This is our God. We have waited." Keep waiting, keep holding on. As Michael McClain told us, John, "Hold on. The light will come."

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:07:39 Yeah. I can't tell you how many times in the last even six months I've been praying for my loved ones, and just praying, "Can you please do this now? We need this now," and just pleading with all my heart, "We really could use this now." Yet what I have to remind myself is I have seen moments that I can rejoice in, that I wanted it all better now, but I did see it's a little better, and I need to rejoice in those little better moments while I'm still waiting for the big stuff. I'll rejoice in those little moments and I can make it through the however long the wait is because I have full confidence in what Isaiah's teaching me that eventually it may not be the now that I want, but eventually this happens.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:28 Eventually the tears will be wiped from their faces.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:08:33 Yeah. Well, our prayers and thoughts go out to Bishop Hanson-
- John Bytheway: 00:08:38 Oh, man. Absolutely.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:08:40 ... and his family. Well, should we jump to chapter 28?
- Hank Smith: 00:08:45 Please do.
- John Bytheway: 00:08:45 Sure.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:08:46 Chapter 28 and 29, we're fairly familiar with these as members of the church because Nephi makes reference to them and they have a lot of ways that we interpret them because of Nephi and Latter-day prophets as applying to the Latter-days, and I think those are valid, but I want us to see some other context that I think can help us get even more out of them.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:09:04 Before we get to the verses everyone's familiar with, I think we need to read the beginning of chapter 28 because it actually helps us understand these verses. So we'll start in verse one, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim who's glorious ..." So this is specifically to the Northern kingdom, but he's going to then start to talk about the Southern kingdom as well. So it's also to the Southern kingdom. So that means it's to all the covenant people, and that means it's to me and you, but anyway, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:09:33 So now in Israel, you get these beautiful flowers, and when the rainy season stops, you've got two weeks and they are gone,

just gone, right? So much so that when I teach at the Jerusalem Center when the winter semester students leave, there's still wild flowers all over the place. You've got a week and a half until the spring semester students come, and it's a 50/50 chance whether they'll see any flowers at all. If the rain goes a couple days longer, then they'll see the flowers. If it ends right then, well, week and a half is too long, no more flowers, right? That's it.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:10:03 So that's what he's saying to these drunkards, "You're so excited about these things that the world tells you is important, and it's going to fade like a flower," which are on the heads of the fat valleys, those that are overcome with wine. So a lot of imagery about being transient in nature and about drunkenness. Keep that in mind.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:10:22 Verse two, "Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand." So again, this imagery that there will be a servant or God himself is going to come and humble these drunkards that think they're so great.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:10:40 Verse three, "The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet." So transient, what they think is so wonderful is not going to last. Just in case we haven't gotten this, he's going to say it again, "And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up." This is the fruit that comes and you better eat it soon because with the summer heat, that fruit's not going to last. We have refrigerators so we don't think of that as much as if you didn't have refrigerators, but if you pick a peach while it's 90 degrees and you leave it out, it's not so good pretty soon, right?
- John Bytheway: 00:11:16 You're right.
- Hank Smith: 00:11:17 So Kerry, this is one of those instances where we talked about with Dr. Combs that he repeats himself. He's a poet. So he just repeated himself twice. Said the same thing basically twice.
- John Bytheway: 00:11:29 Right. It's the parallelism. Yeah.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:11:31 It's parallelism, and that also gives emphasis and it helps us remember. This is important. He wants us to get it, and he's going to keep saying that for a while. He's going to talk about their beauty and the judgment, and verse seven is more about that they've erred through wine and strong drink and they're

out of the way because of strong drink. I want to look at the very end of verse seven, "They err in vision, they stumble in judgment." Keep those in mind.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:11:55 Now, verse eight is an image that we don't want to have, but Isaiah paints this image really well. "For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean." Now, you get that with a bunch of drunkards. They've drunk so much, this is what happens, right? They drank so much that they just vomited all over the table. I mean, he's thinking about ritually clean. It's all ruined now because you all threw up all over yourselves because you're so drunk, but that brings us to verse nine, "Whom shall he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." So this is where we get this milk before meat thing, but once you've had the milk, now you can have meat.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:12:35 So he's saying, "I've got all these drunkards who think they know what they're doing, and they're these false prophets and false leaders. They're the people who are supposed to be teaching true doctrine, but they're not. They're concerned with the things of the world, and so really, they're drunk."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:12:48 Now, I want to just take a second and say this is really happening for Judah and Israel. They really have leaders who should be leading them in righteousness, political leaders, spiritual leaders who should be leading them in righteousness and they are not, and they get drunk both on the ideas of the world and on real wine. So they're leading them into unrighteousness, but we should think about how this happens in our life as well. We choose all sorts of leaders, thought leaders in our lives. There are people from Hollywood who set themselves up as prophets. There are people in radio city. There are people on podcasts. Not you guys. There are people on TV shows in Ivory Towers, in newspaper columns, all sorts of people that are spewing out filth in the name of the world, wisdom of the world, and we're eating it up. I want you to think of that image. You're eating up the filth that they're spewing out in their spiritual drunkenness.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:48 The tables of vomit and filthiness. Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:13:51 Oh, man.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:13:51 Yeah, yeah. When we listen to these ideas, these ideas that run directly contrary to what the prophets are teaching us, we are eating spiritual vomit. As a result, we're not the ones who he's going to teach knowledge and get to understand doctrine. So

let's keep going. Verse 10, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

- Hank Smith: 00:14:20 I love the contrast, Kerry. It's wow, gross, but the vomit coming out of these people versus a mother's milk in verse nine, that's about as stark difference as you can get.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:14:33 You're absolutely right. After he says precept upon precept, and we're going to come back to that, and line upon line, verse 11, "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, 'This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear,' but the word of the Lord was unto them, 'Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little;' that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:15:02 So look at what we've got in verse 12 and 13. This isn't how we usually think of this. This is saying that there are people who aren't understanding and they get precept upon precept, line upon line, and they're snared and fall away from it. That seems a little odd to us.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:15:18 Well, let's investigate this just a little bit more because this is actually verse 10 and verse 13 are actually incredibly difficult to translate partially because Isaiah isn't fully using real words. The words that we translate is precept upon precept and line upon line aren't full words. They're partial words, and we translate it that way because they come from the root for a measuring line that you would measure out and a commandment, okay? So that's precept upon precept and line upon line, but he doesn't give the full word.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:15:49 So let me just recite it for you a little bit in Hebrew. It goes [foreign language 00:15:54] That sounds like gibberish, doesn't it? It's not a full word, and so it's intended to sound like gibberish so that when you get this phrase with stammering lips and another tongue, will he speak unto the people? The translation is good, "Precept upon precept, line upon line," because he's clearly using a form of those words, but it's like if I was saying, "Cept to cept to cept to cept," and then, I don't know what, "ine to ine to ine to ine," and you get, "Okay. I think he's saying precept and line, but I don't know, and it just sounds stupid."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:16:29 What he seems to be saying is to the people who are spiritually drunk, who have filled themselves up on the wine instead of the milk and now some opportunity for meat, but Isaiah is teaching

them are what God gives them is gibberish. It's gobbledygook. To them, it makes no sense. Now remember, Isaiah's call was to teach in such a way that those who weren't prepared wouldn't get it, and only those who were prepared would get it. I think this is another version of that.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:17:00 So to those who are prepared, it actually is coming line upon line, precept upon precept, and Nephi will use it that way, and it's a perfect, wonderful, valid interpretation of that, but to those who aren't prepared, it's [foreign language 00:17:13] It's just gibberish, and they fall away back backwards, and they're broken, and they're snared. It sounds like if someone with a stammering lip and another tongue means like a foreign language, it just sounds like a foreign language to them because it makes no sense.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:17:28 I think this is so true. When we are steeped in what the world is telling us, the things the prophets say don't make sense. We say, "You're wrong. No, I can't believe you just said that. It just doesn't compute for someone who is full of the spewing spiritual vomit of the world," but to those who are prepared, they say, "Oh, wait, I get what you're saying." If people are even more prepared, get even more, and people are more prepared than they get even more, and we go bit by bit, line by line, precept upon precept when we're prepared and we go backwards the same way when we're not prepared.

Hank Smith: 00:18:06 This is 1 Corinthians 2:14. Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness--"

John Bytheway: 00:18:16 They're foolishness, yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:18:17 "... unto him. Neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." When you are gorging yourself on the vomit of the world, the spirit of God is anything that comes from the spirit will seem like gibberish like you said.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:18:32 Now, typically, you don't realize you're eating vomit. It's because you're so drunk you don't know. You've listened to the ideas of the world so long. I think President Nelson, this is part of what he's trying to get at when he said, "Make more time for Christ." If most of your information is coming from social media or elsewhere, then you need to get more information from Christ. Stop listening to that so much and make more time for Christ because when we listen to that so much, we don't realize that now all of our thinking is so colored by the lens of the world, that we can't see it or understand it properly, and we don't realize that we're starting to eat spiritual vomit.

John Bytheway: 00:19:09 Oh, man. What you mentioned, President Nelson, and I love that statement. Most of the information you get comes from social media. Your ability to feel the spirit will be diminished. I'm remembering when Moroni all alone, the ultimate single adult, is writing to us and saying, "You've got to read this letter my dad sent me." This Moroni 9, and he's telling him, "It's really bad, son. Things are really bad. The Nephites, they're just as bad. They're killing each other."

John Bytheway: 00:19:41 Then he says, "May not the things which I've written grieve thee down to death," but then he reminds him, "Here's what I want," the last phrase in there. "Think about Christ and how he visited us and let these things rest in your mind." It's the coolest phrase to me, "Let this rest in your mind forever," instead of, as you've been saying, Kerry, all this stuff the world is spewing, the thought leaders that you used. If that's the stuff that's resting in your mind, your ability to feel the spirit will be diminished.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:20:11 See, and we choose our leaders. We choose who we listen to and we can listen to stuff nonstop these days. We can be listening to something every waking moment, and mostly, we are either listening or reading it on our phones. We have so much stuff coming in, and we have to be careful who we're choosing. If it's social media or most sources, it's this spiritual vomit. I love the line you just gave us from President Nelson, where if that's where we're getting most of your stuff, and it doesn't matter if you read the scriptures every day, if 99% of what you're getting is somewhere else, you'll lose the spirit. Well, if you don't have the spirit with you, how can you understand the spiritual things as Paul said or as Isaiah said here, right? You just can't.

John Bytheway: 00:20:56 Yeah. In the youth talk once, I just had this thought. I was talking about how we learned line upon ... I was doing this with my hands, line upon line, precept upon precept, how we learn, and turned it upside down. What does Satan do? Lie upon lie, decept on decept.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:21:15 That's pretty good.

John Bytheway: 00:21:16 That was my own, how did you say it [foreign language 00:21:19]

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:21:20 Yeah, yeah, yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:21:22 He'll lead us carefully down to hell, lie upon lie, decept on decept.

Hank Smith: 00:21:26 One thing I've noticed so far is Isaiah does not hold back when he thinks the leadership is doing the wrong things. Here's what you remind me of. You remind me of drunks, spewing forth vomit, and the people are eating it up. That's what I think of your leadership.

John Bytheway: 00:21:41 Let me paint a word picture for you here, a really bad cafeteria.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:21:47 That's right. Yeah. This is the cafeteria you want to avoid, but we all go there. Now that you know that these words, line upon line, precept upon precept, are drawing on the idea of at least the one about line or drawing upon a line that you use to measure things out, and when you're constructing things, right? It's a construction tool. It can add a little bit more meaning to verse 16 and 17.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:22:10 So this is the cure. This is the antidote for the spiritual vomit. Verse 16, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, 'Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.'"

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:22:38 Do you see what he's saying? He's taking the same [foreign language 00:22:40] and saying, "It's gibberish to you, but I'm going to use these tools, and for those who are getting it line upon line and precept upon precept, I will lay out, measure out the sure foundation that will allow you, which is truth and which is Christ and Christ is truth, that will allow you to withstand when I send a storm that sweeps away the lies, you're going to be okay because you're on a sure foundation. I am going to get rid of the lies."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:23:12 At some point, there will be only truth left, but those who are swimming in the lies are going to get washed away. Those who have learned line upon line and precept upon precept will be standing on a sure foundation and they can withstand the storm. So he's so clever. This is one of those places where you go, "Wow, Isaiah's good."

John Bytheway: 00:23:27 Isn't it fun to see these phrases that we probably are more familiar with in other books of scripture like, "Oh, a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build ..." Well, they cannot. You can hear Helaman talking to Nephi and Lehi, and to see cornerstone and foundation, I love how, and this is I think, Hank, isn't it true one of the comments we're getting is, "I'm seeing so much of the Book of Mormon here in Isaiah," or "I'm seeing other scriptures."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:23:54 Well, and here's a fun little chain for you to go through then. Helaman, who does he read? He reads Nephi and Jacob. Well, Jacob is the one who talks about a foundation when he does Jacob 6 and so on. He's thinking about covenant and Christ and Isaiah. So he's drawing his stuff from these chapters, but actually, you get into Psalms, I'm talking about a foundation as well, Isaiah, often, you'll find a lot of phrases around Isaiah that actually appeared first in the Psalms.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:24:22 So we get Psalms and Isaiah though, just barely finished Psalms, and now we're in the middle of Isaiah, and they are the foundation for many of the images that are in the Book of Mormon via ... So we get Psalms and Isaiah via Nephi and Jacob to all the rest of the Book of Mormon prophets.

Hank Smith: 00:24:38 I'm fascinated with this idea too that the Lord is saying, "There's going to come a storm to sweep away the refuge that the leaders have laid out there." Almost like he's saying, "Just hang on and all that'll be washed away and you'll be left with the truth."

John Bytheway: 00:24:56 Gosh, a refuge of lies. Wow.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:24:59 Yeah. Interestingly, and I don't think this is the only interpretation of that, and I've never thought of this until you just said this, Hank, but as I think about it, when I think about God sending a storm that sweeps things away I think about, well, Enoch's vision that's in Moses 7, where he talks about God sweeping the earth with a flood, with the rains that come from above and, well, truth from above and, oh, righteousness from above and truth from below.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:25:23 Then President Benson interpreting that as flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon. Then I think, "Well, what does expose the lies and give us the truth better than the Book of Mormon? So I don't think it's the only. I think current prophets are also another part of that flood. I think those are probably the greatest parts of that flood is the Book of Mormon and the prophets that we have today. They're the only ways that we stick with the truth instead of being deceived or deceived, if we're going to go with John's phrase, but we'll be deceived by all this garbage that's floating around in the world. So yay for the Book of Mormon and prophets.

Hank Smith: 00:25:57 Yeah. Every six months we have a chance to clean out the refuse, the lies, the vomit around us.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:26:04 I suspect one day there's some bigger storm that it takes the form of the Savior's sword, right?

Hank Smith: 00:26:09 The Savior himself.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:26:11 Well, what if we spend just a little bit of time with chapter 29 as well because there's some verses in here we talk about all the time that I think we can cast a little light on if that's okay.

Hank Smith: 00:26:19 Okay. That sounds great.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:26:22 Let's go to chapter 29 and it starts out with this interesting stuff, "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!" So there's David's city again, but it's Jerusalem. "Add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:26:38 So first of all, let's try and figure out what in the world he means by Ariel. There is a Hebrew word ariel, and it means hearth or hearthstone. So he might be saying, "Woe to your hearthstone," but this word actually can be translated a different way. It's in what we call in Hebrew its construct form, where you take two words and you put them together. So this might be ari el, and ari in construct form would be lion, and el is God. So this might be lion of God, lion of God, which by the way, David and his lion are thought of as the lion of God. So that makes a little more sense to me because we're talking about the city of David and the city where David dwelt.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:27:16 Then he says, "Year after year, you can have sacrifices, but I'm still going to come and distress you because you're not keeping the covenant, of course. I'm going to bring sorrow because you're not keeping the covenant," but that's really what he's saying, "Woe to you. You can do all the sacrifices you want, but when you're not living righteously, distress is still going to come in the form of verse three, "And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee." He's telling you, "Siege is coming."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:27:42 Now, of course in some ways this is God, but in some ways this is the Assyrians. The Assyrians are going to lay siege to Jerusalem. They're definitely going to lay siege to Jerusalem and people are going to die from the famine and the sword and all sorts of other stuff in there.

Hank Smith: 00:27:57 Assyria doesn't take Jerusalem, but they sure come close.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:28:01 They're miraculously spared, but they will lay siege against them. Verse four, "And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the dust, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust."

That's a verse we're familiar with, right? How do we typically interpret that? I think it's a great interpretation.

Hank Smith: 00:28:28

It's the Book of Mormon. Yeah.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:28:30

It makes sense, right? Partially because the golden plates, and Nephi helps us give it this interpretation. He really likes chapter 29. He draws on it a lot. So he'll help us with this interpretation, but we think of the gold plates that are literally buried in the ground, and they come out of the ground and we have the voice of people who have died that speak to us and give us truth. It sounds familiar because it is truth. Wonderful, fantastic, absolutely accurate interpretation, but let's ask ourselves, and this is one of the things that I hope that our audience will do all the time, how would Isaiah's listeners have taken it? Again, if we can uncover that original context, this can really help us. So how would they have taken it in his day and in the next generation?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:29:12

So remember what happens when Jerusalem has laid siege. Sennacherib has come through and destroyed every major city and every defended city with walls or anything in Judah. All of them destroyed. When Sennacherib destroys, he destroys. He burns like crazy. You guys know Jeff Chadwick, who is a colleague of ours, is an archeologist who's been excavating in Egypt for 30 years. He was at a site one time where they hit this ash layer, and you do that as you're excavating. If there's been destruction there, you'll hit a layer of ash where you're like, "Okay, someone burned the city at this point historically."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:29:48

You can always tell when it's Sennacherib because it's more intense, it's a bigger layer. That guy just burned, right? If you're doing the chronology and you know the pottery and everything else, you can say, "Okay. Yeah. This is where we expect Sennacherib would fit chronologically and here it is," but a guy came to visit this site, and as he's coming, it's another archeologist who had a lot of experience there, and as he's coming and he hasn't been there to see all this stratigraphy and the pottery and know the dating and stuff, so he can't say, "Okay. This is where I should expect to see Sennacherib," but he just comes up and he sees the ash layer and he says, "Oh, Sennacherib was here." You can just tell.

Hank Smith: 00:30:20

Wow.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:30:20

That guy was so destructive that literally 2,700 years later an archeologist can walk up and see the destruction and say, "Oh, Sennacherib was here," and he was. It was Sennacherib. He was right. That's how destructive this guy is.

- Hank Smith: 00:30:36 This guy that we talked about with Dr. Sears who was coming to Hezekiah with a message of, "I've taken everything else and I'm going to take you."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:30:46 That's exactly right. So this is the guy who has gone through, and we're talking about a city in Judah, this layer of destruction, he has gone through and burned those cities like that, and he kills all the people around and he does it often in unpleasant ways. He takes them to the next city that he's going to act. So we have pictorial evidence of this because he carved it on his own palace.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:31:06 After he conquers Azekah, he goes to Lachish and he's laying siege to Lachish, and he brings with them prisoners from Azekah outside of the walls while he's laying siege. He's impaling them. He's flaying them. He's cutting their hands and their feet off to scare everyone inside of Lachish so that they'll just give up. I would guess he probably did the same thing at Jerusalem. I don't know. It doesn't talk about that.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:31:30 So by the time he gets to Jerusalem, so many people have died, and a lot of those cities are never inhabited again. He has just devastated the countryside. So many people have died and people die in Jerusalem as well. Now, all of those people are low in the ground. They are low in the dust.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:31:49 By the time Hezekiah is getting people in Jerusalem to repent, there are already people in Judah elsewhere who are dying. Those people who are laid in the ground are speaking out of the dust to the people at Jerusalem and their deaths, their dying moldering bodies are telling them, "Destruction's coming. You keep the covenant or this is what happens."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:32:11 I would guess that's how in Hezekiah's day and Isaiah's day and in the generations thereafter, that's how they interpreted this. We know about the people that died. We know this was real and they speak to us. The Northern kingdom was scattered and destroyed. We've got some of the people living here in our city in Jerusalem whose family members were killed in the Northern kingdom or scattered and destroyed and they're speaking to us.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:32:35 So I would say that's the original context for this. It's not different than the Book of Mormon speaking to us. This is the Bible being a voice out of the ground speaking to us. I feel like this year this verse has been fulfilled more than ever before in those terms. I feel like that the Bible and our Israelite ancestors that we're reading about are speaking to us out of the ground with a familiar spirit out of the dust. They're coming to life again

as it were for us, and we're learning the lessons that they would have us learn from their lives.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:33:11 Out of the dust is an important phrase to me. I call my website that. I call almost everything I do that because that's what I want is for us to learn from these people. I want us to be able to take the scriptures and have them come out of the dust and become real for us so that we can learn from them, from the Nephites, for sure, but also from the people in the Old Testament and the New Testament and the Doctrine and Covenants and whatever else. All of these people should be speech low out of the dust, and they should speak out of the ground, and we should learn from them.
- John Bytheway: 00:33:45 I like the word familiar. It took me years to see the word family in there. This is our family familiar. We're present-day Israel. Our family is talking to us.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:33:56 Very good, and there's a cultural element in there as well that in the law of Moses, they keep getting after them and don't seek for familiar spirits. You don't want necromancers and so on because there's a culture where you try and speak with someone who is a family member that you're familiar with or someone else you're familiar with, but largely family members. Some of this comes from Egypt because it's a real thing in Egypt that they would write letters to the dead and ask the dead to come and intervene in their lives and try and have experiences with the dead, right?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:34:24 God doesn't want that to happen in a false way. So that's why he says you should kill necromancers and people who are telling you the witch at Endor that Saul uses. You should not use those people to try and interact with the people who have already died. That's not the way to do it. There's a right way to do it, and this is the right way.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:34:42 So there is a way to have a familiar spirit or a familiar voice come to you, and it's to read the scriptures. It's to read this and to let them speak to you and teach you and learn the lessons and don't repeat their problems, don't repeat their history. So I hope we're learning from our Israelite ancestors about listening to the wrong voices, about worshiping more than one God, and whether that be the ideas of the world is our false god or whatever it is. We've got to learn from these familiar voices speaking to us out of the dust.
- John Bytheway: 00:35:13 Thank you. I've heard critics of the Book of Mormon talk about a familiar spirit because one of the ways that phrase is used, which you just articulated, is for seance type of a thing, a

familiar spirit, and this is using it in a more opposite type way, a positive way. This is our family talking to us. So I just wanted to clarify that because I've heard that as an anti-argument, "Oh, familiar spirit, that's a seance." No, that's not what we're talking about here. Same words, but that's not what we're talking about.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:35:43

Right. See, and that's the thing is that what happens so often is that Satan takes a principle, a good principle of God and he gives it a satanic perversion, secret combinations instead of sacred covenants and so on. That's just Satan's MO. So that's what we have going on here is that there is a way God wants us to learn from our ancestors, and it's this way, from the scriptures, from temple work, from reading family history, that way, not by asking someone who works with Satan to try and contact someone on the other side of the veil.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:36:18

Now, do we think that people from the other side of the veil might come and contact us? Yeah. We've got lots of stories in our church history of God sending people to do that. It's God sending people. It's not us getting some weird person to try and make that interaction themselves, but the primary way is through the scriptures. I know I said this on the very first episode of this year with you guys, but I hope that we will think of the Old Testament as our family history. This is our family history. We're reading about their history. Let's learn from it. Let's let them speak to us out of the dust.

Hank Smith: 00:36:51

This has been fantastic, Kerry. Later in 29, am I right in saying, is this Isaiah saying there's going to come an army that thinks they're going to beat us, but they're going to wake up? Is that verses seven and eight? "The multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision." Is that what he's after here? Is that here comes the Assyrian army and they think they're going to win, and then they're going to wake up and they're going to find out they weren't winning ever?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:37:28

Yeah. They may have conquered for a moment, but not really. I think you're right. Let's read seven and eight. I think it can be given that historical context, and then it can be given some personal application as well. So as you said, "The multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision, and it shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul

hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion."

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:38:02 So yes, Assyria will come and they will feel like they've conquered and they've got what they wanted, and then they're going to find out they don't have what they wanted, and it doesn't work
- Hank Smith: 00:38:12 Like a man who eats in a vision. He eats in his dreams and he wakes up and he's like, "Oh, wait. That was just a dream."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:38:20 That's right, and it's going to happen with Babylon, it's going to happen with Rome, it's going to happen with all sorts of people. They're like, "Hey, we conquered. We did this," and then they're going to find it doesn't really get them what they want. This is true of everyone, not only who fights, and most specifically, anyone who fights against the people of God. There are people today who are fighting against us in all sorts of ways.
- Hank Smith: 00:38:40 ... and think they're winning.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:38:41 Yeah, that's right, but what they're going to find is that the little victories they think they're getting or that satisfaction that they're hoping to get out of what they're doing doesn't really satisfy them. That speaks to a larger principle. There's so many of us, the world tells us, "This is an important thing, and this is how you meet that need," and you've heard this metaphor, I'm sure, but it's like when you climb a ladder and you get to the top of that ladder and you find you've had it on the wrong wall. You cannot satisfy your soul with the things of the world. When you try to, it's like you dreamt that you ate and you wake up and you're still hungry. I think this is a profound lesson.
- Hank Smith: 00:39:22 It is. I have this quote. This is April 2009, Elder Robert D. Hales, "In seeking to overcome debt and addictive behaviors, we should remember that addiction is the craving of the natural man and it can never be satisfied. It is an insatiable appetite. When we are addicted, we seek those worldly possessions or physical pleasures that seem to entice us, but as children of God, our deepest hunger and what we should be seeking is what the Lord alone can provide, his love."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:39:53 That's exactly it. Yeah. So you remember that middle part where he said, "The fallen man craves that which ..." Read that part again.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:00 He said, "We should remember that addiction is the craving of the natural man and it can never be satisfied. It is an insatiable appetite."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:40:13 Yeah, and I think that's true. Just anything having to do with the fallen man, what the fallen man craves cannot be satiated. It's impossible because it doesn't satisfy the soul. Get it again and again and again what you crave as the fallen man, but it doesn't actually satisfy any of your real needs, and what we need is that which will satisfy it.

John Bytheway: 00:40:38 Yeah. It's such a deception in that way. Yeah. What's the other phrase? You can never have enough of what you don't need.

Hank Smith: 00:40:45 Goes back to Jacob. Jacob said almost the exact same thing, "Why do you spend money for that which hath no worth nor labor for that which cannot satisfy?"

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:40:56 Actually, he's paraphrasing Isaiah when he talks about laboring for that, which is of no worth. I love this image though. I think it's one of the more powerful images I've encountered, this idea of dreaming that you ate and you wake up still hungry. That's what too many of us are doing.

Hank Smith: 00:41:13 I don't use this as a hahaha verse, but I often think of it when I hear a critic of the church say the church is falling, it's going down, and I think back to this verse, "Oh, you are in a dream where you think you're winning and soon you will wake up and find that you weren't ever winning at all."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:41:33 Yeah. In fact, I'll use an example and try and be fairly vague because I don't want to pick on someone too much, but I know of someone, a particular person, who doesn't like some of the things I write about the book of Abraham and so has publicly tried to just say things about my scholarship and doesn't have anything real to say. She just chooses things that actually aren't true, but repeatedly says, "Okay. This scholarship is ..." and repeats a series of things that aren't true. It feels pretty happy in the moment with what she feels like she's accomplished, and yet is one of the less happy people that I know overall.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:42:09 It makes me sad because she is trying to find happiness and going about it in a way that just doesn't help and feels like it's hurting us. It doesn't hurt us, but it gives that quick little adrenaline rush with the crash after. That's what the dream of eating is is that. So often, that's what these addictive behaviors and all sorts of other things are. We feel the need for something and we get the quick adrenaline rush and then we have to wallow in the crash.

Hank Smith: 00:42:41 It's empty.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:42:41 Yeah, and the crash after, and that's what the world gives us. The vomitous ideas of the world give us no real substance to eat.

Hank Smith: 00:42:51 I had a close friend decided to leave the church. We stayed friends. He ended up returning, took some years, but he ended up returning for his comment was, "I was empty over there. I thought I would be full so I came back." It was a story of redemption, but it was a sad story to hear.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:43:11 Yeah, but so glad for him because so many aren't as wise as he was that they feel the emptiness but they never go back. Bless him for having made that choice.

John Bytheway: 00:43:21 I hope that kind of a story gives people hope. I have a friend whose daughter was wandering for a while. He noticed something in the Book of Mormon that I thought was so interesting that when the angel came in Mosiah 27 to Alma and the four sons of Mosiah, he's mostly talking to Alma, he said, "Your father has prayed with much faith concerning the exact phrase that thou might just be brought to a knowledge of the truth." It wasn't he's prayed with much faith concerning you that you'd come back to church. It was that you would come to a knowledge of the truth.

John Bytheway: 00:43:55 My friend used that language in his own prayer, and maybe that was a strange route for your friend, Hank, to go and discover how there's nothing else out there, it's so empty, but he did. He came to a knowledge of the truth, and I hope people will have hope if they have a loved one out there in that situation views what the angel said that Alma prayed for. They'll come to a knowledge of the truth and you don't give up, and maybe that prayer will be answered and they'll come to a knowledge of the truth maybe in a way that you or they don't expect.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:44:30 Maybe this allows us to circle back around to what we were talking about earlier with the idea that Isaiah keeps holding out this promise that there will be a remnant and that remnant will come back. Sometimes that's a remnant whereas you've got all the house of Israel and many are destroyed, but a remnant is preserving that come back. Sometimes it's a remnant of me. Hopefully what that means is that the natural man is being killed off in me, and what's left after I've gone through all those painful things that's paring away the natural man in me is the remnant that will come back, and the message of Isaiah is God always accepts that remnant back, always.

John Bytheway: 00:45:13 Love it.

- Hank Smith: 00:45:14 Yeah. I doubt there's anyone out there listening who is fighting on the opposite side, but the story does need to be told. You may feel like you are winning that somehow you're damaging the work and you're going to bring it down. The message of Isaiah 29:7&8 is no, you are not. No unhallowed hand can stop this work from progressing. What does Joseph Smith say? "Calumny may defame. Mobs may assemble, internet sites may pop up, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent. It is winning and it will continue to win."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:45:56 Amen. So let's just keep going in chapter 29 a little bit, and we'll just briefly recap this as he goes on to talk about in verse 10, "The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered," and 29 continues the thoughts of 28. These are the leaders to whom what the Lord is really teaching is gibberish. It's smattering lips and a foreign tongue. That's the leaders he's talking to. So none of this makes sense to them.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:46:22 Then we get verse 11, "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, 'Read this, I pray thee:' and he saith, 'I cannot; for it is sealed:' And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, 'Read this, I pray thee:' and he saith, 'I am not learned,'" but then he's able to read it.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:46:37 Now, of course we know the Book of Mormon interpretation of this, which is absolutely correct. Nephi alludes that this will happen, and then when Martin Harris goes to Charles Anthon and shows him some characters, we get a fulfillment of this in a couple of years, you're going to review this story again. I think that's absolutely a correct fulfillment of it, but if we keep going with that original context, I think we can see some more ways this applies to our life because what he is saying, if we keep with what we were talking about in 28 and these verses in 29, what he's saying is that when you are full of the spiritual vomit of the world, and so you feel pretty good about yourself because you know so much and you're full of this spiritual vomit, then all of these true words are sealed. They make no sense to you, but those who are humble enough to know that they need to learn from God, it will make sense to them.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:47:31 You remember when we were talking about 2 Nephi 9 and the Os and woes? One of the woes is woe unto the learned because he thinks he knows what he's doing. They think they're wise, but to be learned is good if you harken into the councils of God. I think, again, that Jacob had these verses in mind. This is the learned can't learn, and the one who's not learned does learn. So again, Jacob just has another way of saying what Isaiah is

here. I think it's just more commentary in Isaiah. So I really do think that Jacob is drawing on 28 and 29 as he talks about this. In my commentary, I didn't talk about that. I wish I would've done that. Maybe in the next edition.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:48:07

This is important stuff. Again, I think we can understand that Book of Mormon interpretation, but we can apply it to ourselves better if we think of that original context as well that, "Huh, which one am I? Because obviously, I'm not Charles Anthon and I'm not Joseph Smith, but I might be some of the folks in Israel who think they know what they're talking about. Let's be clear. I mean, I have a PhD in this stuff. I'm in the at risk category according to Jacob. I should really stop and ask myself. Am I so sure I know what I'm talking about that I don't listen to the prophet, that I don't listen to the spirit that it's sealed to me and I can't learn precept upon precept, line upon line, it's gibberish to me or am I humble enough to say, 'You know what? I'm going to learn whatever God's going to teach me today,' and if it goes against what I thought, and if it goes against my training, I'm still going to learn from God. Does it go against what the world is saying to me? I'm still going to learn from God."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:49:04

Those are some important lessons we can learn from this. When we are learning that way, and then we can avoid verse 13 and we can move to verse 14. Verse 13 is, "Wherefore the Lord said, 'For as much as this people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.'" Doesn't that fit in so perfectly with what we've been talking about?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:49:26

So many people who have been so influenced by what the world teaches, there are a thousand ways this can be manifest, but we're saying that we're following Christ and probably in their hearts they think they're following Christ but not really because what they're really doing is their heart has been given to the ideas of the world. So we want to avoid being those people and instead be what we see in verse 14, "Therefore will I proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:49:54

Now, we don't want to be that for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. We want to be part of the marvelous work and the wonder, which we know one very real specific and maybe most important fulfillment of that is the Book of Mormon, but it's any truth that is being taught by God. It's any line upon line, precept upon precept that the spiritually sensitive can understand.

That's the marvelous work, and it is going forth, and we want to be part of it. That's the gathering of Israel. That's how it happens.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:50:23 We want to be part of what President Nelson tells us is the most important cause on earth is we want to be this marvelous work to get people to quit listening to the world. Quit getting most of your information from social media and online sources and whatever else and make more time for Christ so you can understand the things by the spirit, so they make sense to you instead of foolishness to you, they're not gibberish to you, and then we can really come unto Christ. Oh, I wish we could all be doing better at that.

Hank Smith: 00:50:50 Yup. I've already said it once, but I'm going to say it again because it bears repeating up. 1 Corinthians 2, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God for they are foolish, foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." That's exactly what we're talking about here. It's not that they won't hear them. It's that there's not even a comprehension.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:51:14 Yeah. It's beyond their ability to understand. It's a foreign tongue a stammering lips. Now, let's jump to another part of Isaiah that I'm sure you'll cover later, but let's just allude to it. When I divide chapters of Isaiah and say, "This chapter is about this," and so on, I always put chapter 58 as a turning point, and it's because this is where they start to really keep the Sabbath. They're really going to keep the fast, those kinds of things, but it's in chapter 58 where he says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts and my ways are not your ways."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:51:40 That's the reason for this. What God is trying to teach us is beyond our natural capacity to understand. The only way we can understand it is if we have the spirit with us because we're just playing as mortal beings. We're not capable of it. You can only understand it if the spirit is with you, and that's why it's foolishness unto you or it's [foreign language 00:52:04] because our spiritual vomit made us spiritually unclean, so we can't have the spirit with us. If the spirit's not with you, things that are beyond your ability to understand are going to remain beyond your ability to understand, but if the spirit is with you, your capacity has increased and you can understand line upon line, precept upon precept.

John Bytheway: 00:52:25 I think with everything we've been saying here, I love the way President Nelson said it. He's not saying don't be aware. We're not hiding away from the world. You know what's going on in the world, but if most of your information, if your reliance is on

that instead of your relying on Christ and focusing on Christ, and what else did President Nelson say? Your happiness has more to do with the focus of your lives than the circumstances of your lives.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:52:50

Yes.

John Bytheway: 00:52:54

We're going to be in the world, but we're not going to be of it. We're going to be aware, but our focus and our reliance and our devotion, our loyalty is going to be to Christ.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:53:01

Amen.

Hank Smith: 00:53:02

Section 93, both of you will know this. The glory of God is intelligence or in other words, light and truth. This is verse 37. Light and truth forsake that evil one. So the more you get involved in light and truth, the less desirable the vomit of the world is for you. It's just not. It becomes less and less attractive. He says, "But the wicked one cometh," this is verse 39, "and taketh away light and truth through disobedience."

Hank Smith: 00:53:33

None of us is immune. The light and truth that we have can be taken away through disobedience. If we stop listening, if we pick up a new vomit voice and start filling our life with it, then the things of God that used to seem so beautiful to us will all of a sudden be gibberish, be foolishness.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:53:53

It's so true. When you say that I think of, I remember Wendy Watson Nelson, Sister Nelson, talking about President Nelson and things that she saw in him. I think that she was saying they were even heightened a little bit when he became prophet, but that she'd saw in him anyway, and one of them was that he can't stand contention. If there's even a little bit of contention on the TV, he has to turn it off. I think that ties in with his talk, where he recently told us, "Please get rid of contention in your lives." I actually have seen it. I've just been able to see President Nelson in-person a little bit, where some people were talking with him and there were some teenagers. They teased each other a little bit, and you could tell he just moved on. He didn't want to be part of that teasing. Even though it was gentle and not bad, it was just enough contention. He just wanted to have nothing to do with that.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:54:38

I think that's an example of this idea where he's so full of light that he forsakes stuff that many of us would feel okay about. I found that even with myself. Shows that I used to think were fine in terms of violence, I hope that I'm continually becoming a little bit more godly, and there are things that I thought were fine a few years ago that I look at it I'm like, "Oh, my gosh, turn

that off. I can't stand that," but as you said, the opposite of that happens as well.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:55:04 So again, we get these cohesive units. So we talked about 24 through 27. I'd say 28 through 30, you can make an argument for after that, but at least 28 through 30, you get this same thing. You get this forsake the garbage of the world and only turn to God, and if you don't, then the things of God are going to seem like garbage to you, which is exactly what you just read in section 93, I think, Hank, is that exact same thing. So there's some wonderful verses in chapter 30 that I think highlight the same thing that keep talking about the same themes. These three chapters just have the same themes said in lots of different ways.
- John Bytheway: 00:55:39 Well, Samuel the Lamanite just talks about if a prophet comes among you and says this, says, "Do whatever your heart desires," you'll hold him up. You'll say he's a prophet. You'll feed him. You'll clothe them in the finest stuff, but if a prophet comes and tells you about your sins, you'll say he's a false prophet and everything. It's footnoted here. Let's do nine and 10. This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord, and there's a difference between will not and not. This is choosing not, right?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:56:11 Good. Do you hear the echos of chapter 28 in there, right? Because remember law, that commandment, that line because the root for [foreign language 00:56:19] is commandment, right? So you've got this idea that they are still choosing not to listen to what God's trying to teach them line upon line, precept upon precept. So anyway, sorry. Keep going.
- John Bytheway: 00:56:30 Oh, thank you. Yes. So verse 10, which say to the seers, "See not," and what is the seer? One who sees.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:56:39 "Stop seeing."
- John Bytheway: 00:56:40 Yeah, "Stop doing that. Stop being what you are," which say to the seer, "See not," and to the prophets, "Prophesy not unto us right things. Speak unto us smooth things. Prophesy deceits," and that is what Helaman was saying. If a prophet comes among you and says this and says, "Do whatever your heart desires," I think that's what Samuel the Lamanite says. Oh, I like this guy. That's your thought leader right there. Right, Kerry? If a prophet comes and warns you about your sins, you'll want to cast him out to what Samuel the Lamanite says. I like Isaiah 30. What do you think are smooth things? Things that aren't too hard, things that you're doing, all's well in Zion, you're fine, don't worry about it.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:57:26 Well, that's the smoothest easiest thing ever, "Okay. I am what I am." Do you remember when King Ahab wanted to go to battle and Jehoshaphat was with him and they say, "Well, let's get some prophets to tell us." So they get all these prophets who were telling them, "Yeah, go do it. It's going to be great. It's going to be great." Jehoshaphat says, "Wait, isn't there a prophet of Jehovah around?" and Ahab says, "Yeah, there's this guy Micaiah, but I don't like him. He always says bad stuff about me so I don't call him anymore."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:57:52 That's exactly what we're talking about. He wanted someone who would tell him what he wanted to hear. He didn't want someone who would tell him, "Okay, that's not so good. We love you, but you're still going to have to keep the commandments," kind of a thing. I think we see that in our day, and that gets to where you're saying to the seer don't see and to the prophet don't prophesy. Even what we get in verse 11 and 12, "Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, 'Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon,' therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall."

Hank Smith: 00:58:26 It's going to come down.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:58:27 You're going to fall because of this, and note the progression. You lie and you want these false prophets, these false thought leaders, and then because of what you believe from them, you don't want to hear from real prophets and seers, and then you don't even want Christ. You don't want the Holy One of Israel. That's the progression. Spend too much of your time getting your information from non-Christ sources, and pretty soon you don't want Christ sources and then you don't want Christ. That's a bad place to be.

John Bytheway: 00:59:02 That's a lie upon lie, deceit upon deceit kind of progression.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:59:06 Exactly.

John Bytheway: 00:59:07 You're dwindling in unbelief. Yeah. You're going carefully down to hell type of a thing.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:59:13 That's profoundly said.

Hank Smith: 00:59:14 Listen to this from April 2014 general conference, Elder Holland, "Sadly enough, my young friends, it is a characteristic of our age that if people want any gods at all, they want them to be gods who don't demand much, comfortable gods, smooth gods, who not only don't rock the boat, they don't even row it, gods who

pat us on the head, make us giggle and tell us to run along and pick marigolds. Talk about man creating God in his own image."

- Hank Smith: 00:59:46 Kerry, you said earlier that there are people who say, "Oh, Jesus said love everyone. Jesus said this." Sometimes I think, "Did you read the New Testament?" Jesus has standards. He has boundaries and standards that are so difficult to reach about forgiveness, about morality, and just a little one, "If you love me, keep my commandments." That was kind of one that gets tossed out the window because Jesus said love everyone. Yes. Jesus said love everyone, but Jesus said a lot more than that. He had a lot more to say than that.
- John Bytheway: 01:00:21 If we love God, we're concerned about his commandments. It's tough, isn't it, Hank and Kerry? I think it was Elder Christofferson who said, "Well, God doesn't want any of us back just the way we are."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:00:35 That's right. He wants us better. That's exactly right. He doesn't want us to be satisfied with just the way we are. Think about it. Do you want a parent or do you want a coach? Let's use a coaching analogy. Do you want a coach who just says, "Okay. You're good enough"?
- Hank Smith: 01:00:49 You're doing great.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:00:50 "We don't need to practice. We're not going to help you reach greater potential. You're good the way you are," right? No one wants that. As you say all of this about the standards, and I don't know that they've read the New Testament, again, this helps me circle back around to some of what we were talking about earlier. I've heard lots of people who say, "Well, the God of the Old Testament is a God of justice and the God of the New Testament is a God of mercy." I think you didn't read either book.
- Hank Smith: 01:01:12 Yeah.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:01:13 Right? What in the world? You chose the two verses you didn't like in the Old Testament and two verses you didn't like in the New Testament because you've got plenty of both in both. As we said earlier, we want both the justice and the mercy because the justice gets rid of those who are oppressing us unjustly, and the mercy makes it so that if we're trying to keep the covenant, we're going to be okay.
- John Bytheway: 01:01:39 That's back to Alma telling Corianton, "Let his justice and his mercy and his long suffering have full sway in your heart." Get the whole picture of all of those attributes that he has and look

at all of this. It's a rigorous gospel. What we're being asked to do is we can't do it without leaning on Christ.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:01:59 Yeah, and with that, trust in his sword.
- Hank Smith: 01:02:02 Kerry, this has been fantastic today. I think this is the fourth time you've been on our podcast. Thank you for not tiring of us.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:02:08 Yeah. You're getting desperate.
- Hank Smith: 01:02:09 Yes.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:02:10 I can tell you're getting desperate.
- John Bytheway: 01:02:11 We're fortunate.
- Hank Smith: 01:02:14 We would encourage everyone to go back and listen to some of Kerry's previous episodes. They're just wonderful. They really are. At the end of this episode, Kerry, why don't we just do major takeaways from just Isaiah in general? I know how much you love Isaiah, and I know how much a lot of our listeners don't love Isaiah.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:02:35 They're going to love him by the end of this year. Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 01:02:38 They want to. So let's talk major takeaways from not only this section, but Isaiah in general. What do you love about him? Get our listeners pumped up to study Isaiah.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:02:48 Yeah, I'm happy to do that. In fact, that's why I titled my commentary, Learning to Love Isaiah. That's what I want. I want them not just to study it, which we're commanded to do or to search their words, I want us to love Isaiah. I think that really between podcasts like yours and all the tools and resources that are out there to help people, I think people are going to be loving Isaiah by the time we're done with this.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:03:12 Maybe a couple thoughts that can help with that. As I've studied Isaiah, and sometimes I get lost in the little thicket, when you're doing a verse by verse commentary, you're looking at each little teeny verse, and every now and then I'd stop and say, "Okay. Let's look at the big picture. Let's look at how do these verses fit together, how do these chapters fit together, how does the book fit together." In doing that, I actually discovered chiasmus. Chiasmus, I don't think anyone had ever seen before. I think my commentary is the first place it's published. That goes from chapter 40 to chapter 57.
- Hank Smith: 01:03:43 Wow.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:03:43 Huge chiasmus, and the central chapter, so in a chiasmus, the central point is the most important point, and the central chapters are actually the ones Nephi loves is chapter 48 and 49. These chapters, and the chiasmus as a whole is about covenant and redemption, and the central chapters there are that you're in trouble if you don't make and keep a covenant and get redeemed, but if you do make and keep a covenant, God will send servants, and especially a servant that will redeem you. That's the overarching theme of that chiasmus is that the covenant is available to everybody, but you have to make that covenant and do your best to keep it, and then redemption is available.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:04:28 As I realized that that was the center of that chiasmus, I started to look for what are the major themes of Isaiah. I noticed it's redemption. Then recently, I was actually working on a little booklet that I think should come out sometime in the next year with covenant communications on the covenant. It's a small booklet where I'm trying to focus on how do we recognize the blessings that are promised to Israel like President Nelson asked us to and what does that teach us about what the covenant path actually looks like.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:04:55 As part of that, I did an exercise that you remember just a little while ago I said that the two major phrases that alert us about this relationship with God that's created in the covenant, and that's the primary purpose of the covenant is to have that relationship with God. The two major phrases are that God is our God and we are his people. So I started to look for every time in the scriptures that it talked about his people or my people, say either a prophet saying his people or God or Christ saying my people and started to just discuss what are the promises that are in there. If I saw the same promise more than once, then I'd put that reference again and again.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:05:33 The longest one, the one that had the most references was the phrase redeem. It's the phrase that Isaiah, especially in Isaiah, but it's true all throughout the scriptures but especially in Isaiah, God wants to redeem us, and he will preserve us and redeem us. That's why he sends his son, and it's why he made a covenant, and it's why he's doing everything he does because he wants to redeem us so that we can come back to be with him, as we said, in a higher state, but we can have that closer relationship with him because we've been redeemed.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:06:04 If you look for that theme in Isaiah, the theme of God sending servants to help us be redeemed, and that he will never stop working with us until we are redeemed, and that when we receive that redemption we will receive joy, if you look for that

theme, you'll find it all over in Isaiah. There is more about praising and joy in Isaiah than I would've guessed before I started really studying Isaiah, but it's all over the place. There's also plenty about warning of consequences. If you don't repent, but there's plenty about joy, but it's the joy of the redeemed, as we read here, because we wait. We waited on Christ because we kept the covenant. We did what we needed to, and then that redemption came, which brought joy with it.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:06:48 If we'll look for those themes, I think we'll have Isaiah unfold to us in a joyful way. In fact, Nephi says one of the reasons he gives us the words of Isaiah is because he wants us to not only delight in them, but delight for all men. We really will delight for everyone because we see the joy and the redemption that's available for all of us, and that's what Isaiah's about.

Hank Smith: 01:07:11 Kerry, wouldn't you say also to be patient? You're not going to get every word the first time through. We have been doing this a long time. Just keep coming back to Isaiah.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:07:21 Yeah. So maybe I'll talk a little bit about the process of writing this commentary. As I was writing it, I did it over a period of years because it takes a long time, right? So I do maybe a chapter and then come back and so on. I was fortunate our department chair at the time, Dana Pike, I went to and I said, "I'm working on this commentary and I really think I could do it better if I was teaching the class at the same time." So for the couple years I was working on that, unfortunately, that got me into this rotation where I teach it regularly now. I'm very happy about that, but for the years I was working on it, I was teaching as well so that I could take the stuff I was learning as I wrote the commentary into the classroom, and then I would learn together with my students and see what they understood and what they did, and I'd bring it back and incorporate it into the commentary.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:08:01 What I found is that each time I went through it because that helped me to go through each chapter again and again because I was teaching it this semester and again the next semester and again the next, there were more things that I was learning. I learned something different each time, but what's more, I would say, write down your notes. I'll just confess that as we were doing this together, I was reading in my commentary. It has the chapter or the verses on one side and the commentary on adjacent column. I was reading from the verses here, but I was doing it because I know there are tons of things that I once learned that I don't remember now, but I wrote them down in here. So this was my cheat sheet as we're going through, my own commentary. I have to look at what I said.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:08:42 In fact, I've heard people read something about Isaiah and I was like, "That's really good," and I've gone up and asked them, "Where did you get that from?" "That's your commentary." "Oh, that was me. Good. Well, must have been inspired that day," but there's so much in here. There's no way you can get it all in one go through and there's no way you can remember it all. So write down what you learned, but also look to learn something new each time and be happy with whatever you did learn even if you only understood a little teeny bit of a verse this time. That's fine. Next time you'll get some more and next time some more. If you got something good out of it, that's great, and write it down so you can remember it next time.

John Bytheway: 01:09:18 That's your line upon line right there.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:09:20 Yeah, it is.

John Bytheway: 01:09:22 Hey, I have a quick question. Kerry, you talked about the you will be my God, and I was just thinking some of Jesus', the resurrected Christ's, first word to Mary, "I ascended to my father and your father and to my God and your God." Was that the same kind of a thing happening there?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:09:42 I think so. I think because, again, what that phrase designates is the special relationship. So there's a different relationship for covenant holders than there is for non-covenant holders. That's why we are his people and he's our God because we created formally and officially that relationship, and once we're in that relationship with each other, it just keeps increasing just like any relationship you have with your spouse. The more time you spend with each other in that close relationship, the more you become like each other, the more you understand each other, the closer you draw to each other. So it denotes a relationship, but Christ has an even greater relationship.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:10:17 So I think that's what he's saying there, "He is your God, Mary, you're a covenant person. You've got that relationship with him. He's my God too, and I'm not saying our God because my relationship with him is different than yours," but note what he had just prayed for a few days before that in chapter 17, the great intercessory prayer. Just right before he dies, he prays that the relationship he has with God, everyone will be able to enjoy. He basically after the book of John teaches, he teaches in almost every chapter of the book of John something about his relationship with God. You'll find it. I think there are only two chapters where you will find some verses where Christ talks about his relationship with God, but there at the end, he invites us into that relationship. So when he talks to Mary, there's still a difference between the relationship, but it doesn't have to stay

that way. At some point, we'll have the same relationship with God that Christ does because of Christ.

- John Bytheway: 01:11:13 Love it. I was going to comment too that that theme of redemption, I love to point out we were trying to figure out what is the phrase used to describe the plan of salvation most in the Book of Mormon and it's the plan of redemption.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:11:29 Then I think the next one is plan of happiness. So it's that redemption and joy.
- John Bytheway: 01:11:34 Students love the plan of happiness. When I ask them, "What's your favorite?" they love plan of happiness. Then when you read, who used the phrase plan of redemption? It's the most Alma and the sons of Mosiah, who experienced being knocked flat and I think, "Oh, that's pretty cool how they would focus on their redemption part of it." I guess salvation Savior is in there as well, but I just always liked that.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:11:59 Right, but they certainly knew and understood that they needed redemption. I would agree with you. It's the major theme and then it leads to happiness or joy.
- Hank Smith: 01:12:10 Absolutely. Thank you, Dr. Muhlestein, for being with us again. I actually want to finish today by reading from our Come Follow Me manual. I think it just has a wonderful paragraph in this week's lesson. It says, "Isaiah had a message of hope. Even though the prophesied destruction eventually did come upon these kingdoms, Isaiah foresaw a chance for restoration and renewal. The Lord would invite his people to return to him. He would make the parched ground to become a pool and the thirsty land spring of water. He would perform a marvelous work and wonder, restoring to Israel the blessings he had promised them. Neither Isaiah nor anyone else alive at that time lived to see this marvelous work, but we are seeing its ultimate fulfillment today. In fact, we are part of it."
- Hank Smith: 01:13:02 We want to thank Dr. Kerry Muhlestein for being with us again today. This won't be the last time we see him. We want to thank our executive producers, Steve and Shannon Sorensen, and our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen, and we hope all of you will join us next week. We have another lesson on Isaiah coming up on FollowHIM.
- Hank Smith: 01:13:22 We have an amazing production crew we want you to know about, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Nielsen, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, and Ariel Cuadra. Thank you to our amazing production team.

WHAT DOES "LINE UPON LINE,
PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT" MEAN?



- Hank Smith: 00:05 Hello, everyone. Welcome back to another week of followHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith. I'm here with the amazing John Bytheway. Each week, we take a single question from the Come Follow Me lesson. So John, the question this week is why do we hear this phrase so often in the church, "Line upon line, precept upon precept?" It comes here from this Isaiah section we're on this week where Isaiah says a number of times, "Line upon line, here a little, there a little."
- Hank Smith: 00:34 What does it even mean? I've heard it my whole life. And yet, do I really understand what it means? What does that phrase mean to you?
- John Bytheway: 00:41 This is one of those things I'm so glad there's that line because it kind of tells us the Lord is patient even with us and our learning, that we don't get everything all at once, and that it's not supposed to be that way. But we learn a line upon line, precept upon precept. We get something and, boy, those are wonderful moments. I learned something at seminary today. Tuck that away. Hey, I learned something a couple of days later at seminary that was great. Hey, I learned something studying my scriptures. All of that builds up.
- John Bytheway: 01:09 Have you ever seen, Hank, like on a church history tour or something where they demonstrate how they used to make candles and how they take a string and dip it in the wax and then pull it up? They have to wait for it to dry. And then you dip it down, and then you have to-
- Hank Smith: 01:23 And do it again.
- John Bytheway: 01:23 It's a very slow process. It reminds me of the same thing. In fact, I always think of that when the Book of Mormon talks about, "He began to wax old." I think of candle wax. There's just a little by little by little. I'm glad for that phrase because it's telling us the Lord's patient with our learning, I think. But I also think that Satan has his counterfeit, I like to call it, lie upon lie, deceit upon

deceit where he doesn't say all at once, "Yeah, go break this commandment."

John Bytheway: 01:54 He just says, "Come down from your mountain just a little bit," and then leads us away carefully. So in the same way, we can learn line upon line. I'm grateful for that. The Spirit doesn't shout or send thunder and lightning. Sometimes it's just a tiny little line, a line upon line. That's what I think. What do you think?

Hank Smith: 02:12 A little bit at a time. In my experience, that's most often how revelation has come in my life. There have been times of wowzer, holy, that was, wow, revelation. But those seem to be more rare, where my learning, my testimony, the things I understand have just come a little bit at a time. I think Elder Bednar described it as the rising of the sun. It just slowly gets brighter, almost imperceptible that it's coming. It takes a lot of patience learning this way.

Hank Smith: 02:44 We live in a world of impatience, of instant messaging and download that right now and Google that. I want five billion answers in 2.1 seconds. We live in a world that wants answers right now, and the Lord is saying, "That's not the way I work. I am slow. I will give you just enough for you to think about, chew on, take in. And then you'll be ready for your next bite. A little bit slow, take in." You have to be careful, I think, John, because it's so slow and imperceptible.

Hank Smith: 03:16 Sometimes the adversary comes back and says, "Oh, that wasn't revelation," just a lie upon lie. Let's take that away just a little bit at a time. That wasn't revelation. Look how slow that came. That can't be revelation. Revelation needs to be angels and choirs, when really the Lord is telling us over and over again, especially in the Book of Isaiah, "Line upon line, precept on precept, tiny bit at a time."

John Bytheway: 03:38 You reminded me of something. I think it was David O. McKay that said this, "The Spirit speaks through the voice of the conscience." I thought, "Oh, so when I was in high school and I went to a party and I had this thought, 'I shouldn't be here,' it really sounded like my voice, but could that have been the Spirit saying, 'John, you shouldn't be here.'" But it sounded like me talking. I love that idea that you have the light of Christ. Maybe the Spirit speaks through the voice of the conscience at times.

John Bytheway: 04:11 I think maybe, Hank, we use that ... Book of Mormon, I was at Moroni 7, "Does it invite you to do good and to love God and to serve Him? Then you can know that that was from God." That's

a really helpful key also in the whole line upon line, understanding that.

- Hank Smith: 04:25 Absolutely. So when it comes to spiritual answers, I think, John, when it comes to wisdom, not information, you can get information as quick as you want. But if you want wisdom, you're going to have to be patient. You're going to have to be willing to do it the Lord's way, line upon line, precept on precept.
- John Bytheway: 04:43 If any of you lack information, let him ask of Google. If any of you lack wisdom, that is an entirely different question. See James 1:5. This is what I tell my Gen Z students, Hank. I say, "Sometimes I worry for your generation because you want Google speed answers to golden questions." The golden questions are the where did I come from? Why am I here? What is a good life? What is a good person? Is God real? Those come in God's time, not in Google's time.
- Hank Smith: 05:11 That's exactly right. When you read Joseph Smith-History, he said, "He answered my questions, told me many other things, which I cannot write at this time, and sent me on my way." He didn't say, "Okay, Joseph, we're going to need barcodes on the temple recommends. You're going to have to outline the new For Strength of Youth program." He didn't lay out everything. He said, "Let me give you just enough for you to move forward a couple of steps and be watchful and ready. More will come later." So learn to be patient, and I think you're going to learn the voice of revelation, how it speaks.
- Hank Smith: 05:42 We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. We're in the Book of Isaiah this week. Come on. I know that sounds enticing. Come on over and see what you think. And then join us next week for another followHIM Favorites.