



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 Wednesday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions:

Part 1:

What do you do with prophets? Dr. Ryan Sharp teaches the parallels between Abinadi and modern-day prophets, who teach, warn, and encourage us to increase our ability to receive revelation, follow God's commands, and follow Jesus Christ and invites us to consider how we receive the words of prophets.

Part 2:

Dr. Ryan Sharp invites listeners to consider the difficult things Abinadi and all prophets teach while revealing the power of the redemption of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:00 Part 1–Dr. Ryan Sharp
- 00:03 What to expect in this episode
- 01:21 Introduction of Dr. Ryan Sharp
- 03:20 Abinadi “fans the flame of testimony and courage”
- 05:20 President Packer’s “Therefore what?”
- 06:31 Mosiah 11:1-5,15 - Noah’s character and actions
- 07:35 Mosiah 11:20-26- Abinadi cries repentance (a chiasmus)
- 10:31 Mosiah 11:27-29 - Abinadi and Moses
- 12:45 Mosiah 11:22-27 - The Lord’s people
- 13:55 1 Kings 18 - “How long will ye halt between two opinions?”
- 14:34 What do you do with prophets?
- 20:05 President Nelson “Increase your capacity to receive personal revelation.”
- 24:43 “Not being ashamed of the prophets of Jesus Christ.”
- 27:16 President Nelson and revelation
- 29:44 “We must learn how to distinguish between the King Noahs and Abinadis”
- 33:53 Mosiah 12:1, 19 - Abinadi boldly returns
- 35:33 Mosiah 13:3-7 Abinadi is safe until he completes his message
- 37:41 Mosiah 17-18 Alma preaches Abinadi’s words
- 39:05 Abinadi and Alma’s influence
- 41:33 Did Abinadi know he was successful?
- 42:32 Mosiah 13:9 - Did Abinadi know he would die for his testimony?
- 43:09 Dr. Sharp shares a story of a single convert Neli
- 10:03:53 The macro and micro plan of salvation
- 01:05:57 End of Part 1 - Dr. Ryan Sharp

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II–Dr. Dr. Ryan Sharp
- 00:20 Intertextuality
- 02:01 Alma 12 - Alma and Amulek teaching the words of Abinadi
- 04:49 King Benjamin teaching the words of Abinadi
- 07:27 Arnold Friberg “How I Painted the Book of Mormon Paintings”
- 08:25 Walter Rane paints Abinadi and Noah and Alma
- 10:22 Mosiah 12:20-21 - Prophets teach difficult things
- 12:48 Mosiah 12-15 and Isaiah 52-3
- 15:16 Mosiah 13:27 Abinadi teaches about Jesus Christ
- 16:43 Mosiah 13:31 - Why the law of Moses?
- 18:16 Mosiah 13:5, 15-24 - Abinadi withstands them and continues teaching the Ten Commandments
- 19:56 Mosiah 13:27-33 - Abinadi and Moses
- 22:18 Mosiah 13:28, 14:3, 17:6 - Parallels

- 26:45 Abinadi's name reflects his mission
- 27:40 Mosiah 7:26 Abinadi was slain for his testimony of Jesus Christ
- 31:05 Elder Jensen's "Arms of Safety" and Dr. Sharp shares a parenting story
- 38:11 Mosiah 15 - Untangling Father and Son
- 43:25 Elder Holland's *Christ and the New Covenant*
- 44:22 Mosiah 14,15, and Isaiah 53 - Lamb to slaughter vs lamb to shearer
- 46:58 Mosiah 16:3 - Will we submit our will to the Father?
- 50:30 Isaiah 53 - Abinadi walking us through the Atonement of Jesus Christ
- 53:08 The Atonement of Jesus Christ is everything
- 54:53 Mosiah 15:20-24, 16:6 - Grave has no victory
- 56:37 Dr. Sharp shares a story about a young man's death and hope in Christ
- 01:01:45 "Redemption cometh" and Talmage Sharp preaches
- 1:05:13 Trust Jesus
- 01:10:18 End of Part II- Dr. Ryan Sharp

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Biographical Information:



Dr. Ryan Sharp joined the faculty of Religious Education in 2018 after teaching for ten years in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. He holds a bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University and both a master's degree and PhD from the University of Utah. In addition to his love of teaching and writing on scripture, his other research interests include organizational behavior and the development of Psychological Capital. He is the author of the book *Meeting Christ in the Book of Mormon* as well as several articles and book chapters related to restored scripture, pedagogical scholarship aimed at improving teaching and learning, and organizational behavior. Less formally, and infinitely more importantly, the only way to truly know or understand Dr. Sharp is to know that his wife Jessica is his most and influential partner in all of his professional and ecclesiastical assignments and that they are the very proud, and often overwhelmed, parents of 6 energetic boys.

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- Hank Smith: 00:00:03 Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name's Hank Smith, I'm your host. I'm here with my shining co-host, John Bytheway, and our guest, Dr. Ryan Sharp. John, we're looking at Abinadi today. I know you love the Book of Mormon. I know you love this story. Tell me what you're looking forward to.
- John Bytheway: 00:00:20 I think Abinadi changed the world of the Nephites, like from here to the rest of the Book of Mormon. I'm just excited to talk about him and his impact, even though at the time he may not have known that his impact would last that long.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:35 All the way to the coming of Christ, 3rd Nephi, you have this convert family that comes back to Abinadi. Like I said, John, we're with Dr. Ryan Sharp, he's been here before. Ryan, what are we looking forward to today? What do you have prepared for us?
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:00:49 One of the biggest challenges with this block of scriptures, the fact that there are so many chapters, we're looking at Mosiah 11-17. In most of the other blocks, you've got three or four chapters. What I thought we would do is maybe divide it into two parts and in the first part look at the narrative, the storyline, what can we learn from Abinadi, the person, and the experience and the impact that he makes to connect it with what John said. And then the second part, let's dive into the actual discourse, his teachings, the words, and the impact that those words have.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:19 It sounds great to take a 30,000-foot view and then zoom in on some specific verses. John, Ryan was with us last year, but he may be new to some of our listeners. Can you introduce him for us?
- John Bytheway: 00:01:31 Dr. Ryan Sharp. He had taught in seminaries and institutes for 10 years before joining religious education at BYU in 2018. He has a bachelor's degree from BYU and a master's and PhD from

the University of Utah. He loves teaching, writing on scripture. And other research interests include organizational behavior and the development of psychological capital. I want to ask him about that later. He's the author of the book Meeting Christ in the Book of Mormon, as well as several articles and book chapters related to restored scripture, Pedagogical scholarship aimed at improving teaching, learning, and organizational behavior. And less formally, infinitely more important, the only way to truly understand Dr. Sharp, he says, is to know his wife Jessica as the most important and influential partner in all of his professional and ecclesiastical assignments. They're the very proud and often overwhelmed parents of six energetic boys. Wow. So welcome father of six energetic boys. Thanks for joining us again.

- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:02:32 Thank you. Good to be here.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:34 We love having you. I bet that's a pretty high food bill.
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:02:37 It is. It is.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:38 Six boys. I have four and I know that we're broke. I watched them eat my paycheck. Ryan, tell us about Jessica, this most influential partner.
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:02:52 She really is remarkable. Her maiden name is Farish. She is from Utah County. She grew up in Mapleton and then Highland. The family joke, her mom used to say to my father-in-law, "You can take me anywhere you want in the world as long as it's within Utah County." We've been here in Utah County for our married life and we love it, and she's a remarkable woman.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:13 That's fantastic. Anywhere in the world in Utah County, right? Lehi down to Santaquin. You have a lot of choices there.
- 00:03:20 Ryan, let me read from the Come, Follow Me manual and let's jump in. It says, "Abinadi was only one man testifying against a powerful king in his court. His words were rejected for the most part, and he was sentenced to death. Yet his testimony of Jesus Christ who is the light that can never be darkened sparked something inside the young priest Alma. And that spark of conversion slowly grew as Alma brought many others to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. The flames that killed Abinadi eventually died out, but the fire of faith that his words created would have a lasting influence on the Nephites and on the people who would read his words today. Most of us will never face quite what Abinadi did because of our testimonies,

but we will all have moments when following Jesus Christ is a test of our courage and faith. Perhaps studying Abinadi's testimony will fan the flames of testimony and courage in your heart as well."

- 00:04:11 Ryan, with that, let's do that 30,000-foot view you talked about, Mosiah 11-17.
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:04:18 I want us to think about a quick question. As I talk to my students, I'll usually ask them as we start reading the Abinadi story, how do they picture Abinadi. What does he look like? Is he this absolutely shredded 90-year-old man standing before them like the Arnold Friberg painting that we have? And for most of them, that's him. That's what Abinadi looks like.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:40 A very trim Santa Claus.
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:04:42 Yeah. What I like to do with students is put up a sequence of artistic representations of Abinadi. And for the most part, they kind of follow Friberg's image of this old man always shredded, but this old man who's just ripped and standing boldly, sometimes bound before Noah and the priests. But there are some artistic representations that show him as a younger man that leads to the question for the students, "So how old is Abinadi?" Based on the text, how old is Abinadi? And then obviously we conclude, we don't know. He could have been an older man. He could have been a younger man.
- 00:05:20 To quote President Packer, "Therefore what?" So why even spend time on that? And I usually use this as an opportunity to talk about, first of all, the value of art in helping us visualize some of these powerful scenes in scripture, but also the caution that when it comes to studying scripture, let's not let art be the primary influencer in how we interpret. I do think it's important to make sure we're letting the details of the text or the historical documents paint the picture for us.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:51 That's excellent, Ryan. I think art does influence the way that I see scripture stories and church history stories. My friend Anthony Sweat says, "Listen, artists often aren't trying to give you the depiction of the facts." What the records actually say, they're trying to give you a message. We can be careful saying, "Well, wait, isn't it like this because I've seen it in a painting?"
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:06:14 Yeah. And I think it's important to appreciate it, especially somebody with zero artistic ability. I hesitate to even write or draw on the whiteboard in my classes because I don't have that

gift, and so I'm so thankful for it. But I do think it's important for us to keep in mind let's focus on the text and what the text says.

- 00:06:31 In chapter 11, we're introduced to Noah. "He did not walk in the ways of his father," we read in verse 1. And then I'm going to quickly highlight some of the statements here that help us see what's going on. In verse 2, "He did not keep the commandments. He did walk after the desires of his own heart. He had many wives and concubines. He caused his people to commit sin. He did much which was abominable in the sight of the Lord. They did commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness."
- 00:07:01 If you jump over at the end of verse 4, "He changed the affairs of the kingdom." Remember, he gets rid of the old priests and he calls his friends and they become the new priests. All of them in verse 5 were lifted up in the pride of their hearts. In verse 6, they were supported in their laziness, their idolatry, their whoredoms. If we jump over to verse 14, came to pass that he placed his heart upon riches and he spent his time in riotous living with wives and concubines, and they did spend their time with harlots. In verse 15, he became a winebibber.
- 00:07:35 Anyway, so you get a pretty dark depiction of what's happening there, the sin, the wickedness. You get this heavy description of what's happening there, but I think it's important to keep in mind this is why Abinadi is coming in. This is why in verse 26 it says, "And it came to pass that there was a man among them whose name was Abinadi, and he went forth and began to prophesy." He came in to cry repentance unto this people who were living this really hedonistic lifestyle and seeking pleasure and lust and riches. And their hearts are set upon all of these worldly things.
- 00:08:14 So it's against that backdrop of this wickedness, this sin, people obsessed with pleasure, lust, riches, money, all of these things where we get in Mosiah 11 verse 20, "And it came to pass that there was a man among them whose name was Abinadi." And I love that phrase, "A man among them." But it seems like he's living there. Does he know these people? Does he have previous relationships with them? Was he maybe involved in the previous regime? Perhaps was he a priest? We don't know. We don't have a lot of that information. But Abinadi comes in and obviously his message to this people who are living in sin is repent.
- 00:08:54 Over and over again, if you look at the end of verse 20, "Except they repent, I will visit them in mine anger", the Lord says, " in

verse 21, "except they repent and turn to the Lord their God." And then again up in verse 23, "It shall come to pass that except this people repent and turn unto their Lord." And then 25, "Except they repent in sackcloth and ashes." It's this message of repentance.

00:09:19 And I think it's significant in Don Parry's book entitled Poetic Parallelisms In the Book of Mormon, he shows that Mosiah 11:20-25 is a beautiful chiasmus with the center point, which remember is that primary message being repent and turn to the Lord. And that is at the heart of Abinadi's message really on both visits, but especially pronounced here on his first visit.

00:09:48 Sometimes when we look at this first visit in chapter 11, I'll ask my students, "Who is the primary audience for Abinadi?" And oftentimes they'll say the priests or King Noah. But on the first visit, we don't actually get the exchange with the priest. That's going to come in chapter 12. On the first visit, over and over again, it talks about the people. It's sort of the rank and file common men and women among them. The pattern is the same for both visits where Abinadi comes among the people, he prophesies, he speaks in the voice of the Lord, the people get angry, and then the people basically go and tell on Abinadi. They go and tell the king.

00:10:31 And in the first visit we get Noah's response. If you look at Mosiah 11, verse 27. "Now when the king had heard of the words which Abinadi had spoken unto the people, he was wroth and he said, 'Who is Abinadi?' And then he says, 'And who is the Lord?'" And this response probably shouldn't come as a surprise because this is a pattern that we see all throughout scripture. It's this question of, who is the Lord to tell me these things? Or who is Abinadi? Who is this prophet?

00:11:03 We see the same thing back in the Old Testament, in Exodus. Remember with Pharaoh in Exodus 5. "And afterward, Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, let my people go that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.' And Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I know not the Lord. Neither will I let Israel go'."

00:11:28 Or think of Cain in Moses 5, "I have gotten a man child from the Lord. Wherefore, he may not reject his words, but behold..." So this is Adam and Eve, after they've conceived and bore Cain. "But Cain hearkened not saying, 'Who is the Lord that I should know him?'" And then the implication as the story goes on, "And who is Abel, this man of holiness?"

- 00:11:47 We have another example in the Book of Mormon. Do you remember when Alma and Amulek go to the people of Ammonihah in Alma 9, "Who is God that sendeth no more authority than one man?" So again, it shouldn't be surprising as we look at this text that as Abinadi comes in with a bold message, Christ's repentance, "except you repent and turn unto the Lord, these are the consequences." Well, who are you? Who are these men, these prophets?
- 00:12:14 One of our friends and fellow teachers, S. Michael Wilcox, gave a landmark talk that he entitled King Noah Blindness and the Vision of Seers. So beautifully stated because in verse 29 it says, "The eyes of the people were blinded." With that, I want to highlight what I consider one of the most relevant and honestly urgent messages for our day. We've already talked about how the primary audience for this first visit is the people, so let's look at how the text captures that.
- 00:12:45 Look with me at Mosiah 11 at the end of verse 22, Abinadi speaking in the name of the Lord, the very last phrase in verse 22, the Lord talks about "my people." They're still his people. In chapter 12, verse 1, "Abinadi go and prophesy unto this, my people." In Mosiah 12, verse 4, "It shall come to past that I will smite this, my people." The Lord is making clear these are my people.
- 00:13:17 I'm going to have you go back to Mosiah 11 and look at verse 27 where we get the words of Noah. "Who is Abinadi that I and my people should be judged of him? Who is the Lord that shall bring upon my people such great affliction? I command you to bring Abinadi hither, that I may slay him for he has said these things that he might stir up my people to anger. He's going to raise contentions among my people." Here we have this storyline and we have this conflict where the Lord is saying, "These are my people." And Noah is saying, "Nope, these are my people." Essentially the question is, how long halt ye between two opinions? I mean, in many ways, I see it like Elijah.
- 00:14:01 Do you remember in the Old Testament of 1 Kings 18 that standing before the priest of Baal, Elijah came unto the people and said, "How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. If Baal, then follow Him. If Noah and your riches and your whoredoms and your idolatries, if these are your God, then follow them. And here are the consequences that are going to follow. But if the Lord is your God, then follow Him and choose this day. How long halt ye between two opinions?" So in fact, Hank and John, I want to put you on the spot here for a minute and I hope that's okay.

Hank Smith: 00:14:39 We don't mind being put on the spot, especially I love it when John gets put on the spot.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:14:44 That's good. Unless the listeners think I'm insensitive. I did give a heads-up, so I don't want to come off as somehow throwing you guys under the bus. But I'm going to make a statement that I believe to the core of my soul, and I think it's at the heart of an important message here. I'm going to have the easy job and make the statement, and then I want you guys to defend my statement. How does that sound?

Hank Smith: 00:15:08 Okay, we're on your side. Thank you for being... I'm glad to be recruited.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:15:12 Good. Here's the statement. One of the most important, consistent and overarching questions in all scripture is, "What are you going to do with prophets?" Essentially, how are you going to respond to prophets? I think we see it throughout the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, church history, the Old Testament, the New Testament. I think we see it all over the place. So that's my statement. One of the primary messages and questions of all scripture is, "What are you going to do with prophets?"

John Bytheway: 00:15:44 Such a great question, especially right now. I love the idea of a prophet being called a watchman on a tower. I think it's Ezekiel 3:17. "The Lord says, 'I have called thee to be a watchman on Israel. Hear the word of my mouth and give them warning from me'." Prophets speaking for God and the idea of a tower, because they can see things that those of us at ground level can't see.

00:16:09 Sheri Dew wrote this book called Prophets Can See Around Corners and did a talk at BYU Hawaii called Prophets Can See Around Corners. Coming from her perspective, who has written the biographies of President Hinckley and President Benson, it's really fun to hear her testimony of living prophets. We all know as teachers how hard it is to come up with a really good question, and she has a series of questions in here. Question number two in her book, "Is there anyone you would trust to give you better, more inspired advice, meaning counsel unaffected by personal agenda than members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles?" It's a modern application of your question.

00:16:48 She says, "Can you identify any journalist, talk show host, celebrity, politician, athlete whose counsel or advice you feel is more sound or more informed than that of the 15 men

ordained as prophets, seers and revelators? What about an entrepreneur, billionaire, professor, scholar, theologian, university president or think tank expert or the winner of the Nobel Prize, Academy Award, Golden Globe, or Pulitzer Prize, any blogger, podcaster, YouTube celebrity or star on stage, screen, Hulu or Netflix? I've tried to identify someone who would fit this description. I simply cannot. Throughout my life, I've rubbed shoulders with very influential and celebrated leaders, CEOs, scholars, writers, journalists, diplomats, and politicians. Further, my job requires me to consume a lot of content. Everything from books, magazines, podcasts, movies to a steady flow of posts and tweets on various social media platforms."

00:17:40 "I have my preferred author," Sheri continues, "commentators and experts. I cannot think of anyone I would listen to instead or ahead of the living prophet and the 14 other men ordained as prophets, seers and revelators. No other influencers can do what seers can do. Even experts in their fields cannot with accuracy see around corners." And she goes on, but I love the question, "If they really are watchmen on a tower, if they can really see things we cannot, who would you rather have in charge? Who would you rather take advice from?" I loved that line of reasoning there. And I would suggest our listeners go and watch her talk at BYU Hawaii about prophets can see around corners.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:18:28 That's awesome. I think it's such an important point. And again, it's this idea of what are we going to do with prophets? Do I view the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as wise older men who are from a secular sense, just organizational leaders or managers? Or do I really believe they're prophets, seers and revelators? What am I going to do with them, with their words, with their counsel? Do I really believe that they see? The eyes of the people were blinded to bring it back to Abinadi, but seers see. And to your point and Sheri Dew's point, they see around corners. So great thought. I love that.

Hank Smith: 00:19:07 I have noticed in the Book of Mormon and in other scriptures and very much today that sometimes the response to a prophet is anger. It happens over and over. I was thinking of Samuel the Lamanite, Helaman chapter 16. He's done his work, he's preached his message and they are contending among themselves, "This isn't reasonable. What he said is not reasonable. It's a wicked tradition, that he's trying to keep us in ignorance. This is foolish and vain." Over and over and over, this anger that comes.

- 00:19:41 I also thought of 2 Nephi chapter 1. John, we looked at this in depth here with Dr. Anderson. When Lehi says to Laman and Lemuel, "You're angry with him, but he is seeking your eternal welfare. And that which you call anger is the truth. It's the truth. I know you're upset, but this is the reality."
- 00:20:05 President Nelson says things how they are. He gives the reality and people get upset. This is October 2023 General Conference. "There is no end to the adversary's deceptions. Please be prepared. Never take counsel from those who do not believe. Seek guidance from voices you can trust, prophets, seers, revelators, the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Please do the spiritual work to increase your capacity to receive personal revelation."
- 00:20:35 Thus came a firestorm online of President Nelson is trying to divide families. President Nelson, a prophet of God would never say this type of thing. It's anger. Way back in 2020 at BYU, President Nelson said something that I think maybe was prophetic for his 2023 message. He says, "It is precisely because we do care deeply about all of God's children that we proclaim his truth." That's the motivation behind a prophet. We may not always tell people what they want to hear. Prophets are rarely popular. We see that with Abinadi. We've talked about Samuel the Lamanite, Nephi to his brothers. That which you call anger is the truth.
- 00:21:23 Ryan, John, it's a huge step for someone to go from, "I'm really angry at what that prophet says" to, "I need to listen." That's a hard road.
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:21:34 Yeah, beautiful. And in fact, I had noted that same quote, and I love what he says before then as well. He says, "Sometimes we as leaders of the church are criticized for holding firm to the laws of God, defending the Savior's doctrine and resisting the social pressures of our day."
- 00:21:50 Do you remember when Elder Holland was talking about in his General Conference talk Prophets in the Land Again? He says, "Occasionally people make the comment that perhaps the brethren are out of touch." And Elder Holland said, and this goes back to John's point, "I've never been around a group who's more in touch, who knows more about the issues of today and what we're looking at in the future." So they're aware of all of these things and aware of how it's going to land with some people. And then he says, "But our commission as ordained apostles is to go unto all the world to preach his gospel unto every creature. That means we're commanded to

teach truth. In doing so, sometimes we're accused of being uncaring as we teach the father's requirements for exaltation in the celestial kingdom. But wouldn't it be far more uncaring for us not to tell the truth, not to teach what God has revealed?" And then, Hank, it's the part that you just read, "It's precisely because we do care deeply for all of God's children. Prophets are rarely popular, but we will always teach the truth."

00:22:53 I love that. And I'm so thankful that we have prophet, seers, and revelators who are sensitive to these things and yet are committed to their divine commission to teach truth. Hank, you mentioned Samuel the Lamanite. I love that moment in Helaman 13 when Samuel is rebuking them for this very thing. "You cast out the old prophets and do mock them and cast stones at them".

00:23:17 This is Helaman 13:24, "And slay them." And then he says, "And now when you talk, you say, 'If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets. We would not have stoned them and cast them out. But behold, you are worse than they. For as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declare unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, you're angry with him and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him. And you'll say He's a false prophet, that he's a sinner and of the devil because he testifieth that your deeds are evil.' But if a man come among you and say, 'Do this and there's no iniquity. Do that and you shall suffer not," sort of the you do you. "And if he says, 'walk after the pride of your hearts, walk after the pride of your eyes. And whatsoever your heart desireth, if a man come among you and say this, you'll receive him and you'll say He's a prophet or she's a prophet'."

00:24:16 This seems to be the message of all scripture. Obviously, the overarching purpose of scripture is to lead us to the Savior. But just after that, it seems like the question is what are you going to do with prophets? Think of Isaiah. They say to the seers, "See not." And to the prophets, "Prophesy not unto us right things. Speak unto us smooth things." In other words, "Tell us what we want to hear."

00:24:43 Elder Maxwell in 1979 made this what I think is a prophetic statement. "Make no mistake about it, brothers and sisters. In the months and years ahead, events will require of each member that he or she decide whether or not he or she will follow the First Presidency. Members will find it more difficult to halt longer between two opinions." And then he would say,

"Not being ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ includes not being ashamed of the prophets of Jesus Christ."

00:25:13 And against that backdrop, I wanted to share something about President Nelson. One of the reasons President Nelson makes it so easy to follow the prophet is President Nelson has been following the prophet his entire life. Think of the story that he told when he was a little boy. He had read the prophetic commandment about the Word of Wisdom, and he said, "I wanted my parents to live that law. So one day when I was young, I went to our basement and I smashed on the concrete floor every bottle of liquor. I expected my father to punish me, but he didn't say a word."

00:25:45 Or as a 41-year-old, he was being heavily recruited to work at the University of Chicago. Elder Holland said he was being recruited very aggressively. He would've been made the head of the department. He would have a salary that was through the roof. They would pay for all of his children's education wherever those children went on the face of the earth. But before accepting that position, Dr. Nelson sought and received advice from one additional source. He met with the then church president David O. McKay. President McKay listened and said, "I don't think you should go."

00:26:17 "Just like that," Elder Holland said, "Russell Nelson made the decision on the spot. He's not going to go." In 1979, he's not yet a general authority and he's in a meeting where President Kimball says, "We should be of service to the Chinese people. We should learn their language. We should pray for them and help them." Later, when recounting this experience, President Nelson said, "President Kimball asked us in that meeting to learn Chinese. I did not hear him say, 'Everyone except Brother Nelson'." He learns Chinese and eventually receives the recognition that's entitled The Old Friend of the Chinese people, which is bestowed upon a select few doctors, authors, journalists, and statesmen who over an extended period have established this deep mutual respect.

00:27:05 President Nelson said, with conviction, "It's my testimony that when we follow through with whatever the prophet of God asked us to do, the way will be opened and our lives will be changed."

00:27:16 And maybe one more. Do you remember the experience where he's asked to operate on President Kimball? And the question that's asked is, "Should we perform this operation?" And President Nelson, then Dr. Nelson, he said, "We have no

experience operating on a 77-year-old man in heart failure, doing two operations at once. It's never been done that I know of. It would be extremely risky. As a surgeon, I cannot recommend this operation."

00:27:45 Harold B. Lee then asked what the risks would be if he were to proceed, and he said, "They're incalculably great. I wouldn't recommend the operation." At that point, Spencer W. Kimball said, "There you have it, brethren, I'm an old man ready to die. It is well for a younger man to come to the quorum and do the work I can no longer do." President Lee rose to his feet, pounded the desk with his fist and declared with no small amount of energy, "Spencer, you've been called. You are not to die. You are to do everything you need to do in order to care for yourself and continue to live." Spencer W. Kimball then following the prophet says, "All right, then I will have the operation.

00:28:25 Sister Kimball wept. President Nelson said, "When he spoke those words, my heart sank because the weight of the decision seemed suddenly to pass to me. But this was a remarkable event. This momentous decision which shaped the history of the church was not based on a medical recommendation. It was based strictly on the desire of President Kimball as an apostle of the Lord to be obedient to the inspired direction of the first presidency of the church." And both President Kimball and President Nelson go on to follow the prophet.

00:28:55 It gets significant that President Nelson would later say, "Over the years of my service to President Kimball, I was often asked the question, "When does President Kimball speak as a prophet and when does he speak as a man?'" And he said, "I never ask myself this question. The only thing I ask is, how can I become more like him? That is the feeling of my soul. As we look at prophets and apostles, I don't ask, 'Okay, are they saying this as an apostle or a prophet or are they saying this just as a man?' I desperately want to be more like them." And listen, because prophets really do see around corners, if we miss that message in this story of Abinadi, I feel like we're missing one of the most central messages in the broader narrative that we have.

John Bytheway: 00:29:44 I wanted to first read from S. Michael Wilcox what you mentioned a minute ago, Ryan. He said, "We can encapsulate the message of this story and what follows with this very simple phrase. 'We must learn how to distinguish between the King Noah's and the Abinadi's in our lives.' Often when we are blinded by the Noah's in our lives, we cannot differentiate between the true friend and the false one. When someone else

comes to our aid, the Abinadi's of our lives, and tries to warn us because they see more clearly and see the unhappiness that is coming, we treat them sometimes as the enemy. We simply must learn how to distinguish between the true friend and the true enemy.

00:30:27 If Hank or Ryan were to come to one of my classes, if they said to me afterwards, "John, you're doing these three things that are hurting you in your teaching," or even as a friend, not about teaching, "John, you're doing a couple of things..." This happened to me when I was a young adult, a trusted adult came to me and said, "John, you're doing something that's hurting you." Is that a message from a friend? Yes. What if they came to me and said, "Oh, you're fine just the way you are?" Which one is the real friend?

00:30:59 I also like to look at the God angle here. Why did God send a prophet? Why didn't he just wipe them out? He sent them and he called them "my people" because he loves them. The prophets are bringing that message from God out of love, not out of trying to be popular because as you've said both of you, sometimes those messages aren't received with the love that they came with.

Hank Smith: 00:31:23 My daughter is a big Star Wars fan, and we see lots of lessons like this in Star Wars. You see the downfall of that main character, Anakin Skywalker. It's so obvious to everyone who's watching the movie, he's so blind. Here's his friends trying to help him, trying to talk to him. Even his own family, his own love is trying to talk to him, refuses to see it. If I could talk to my friends who have turned on President Nelson, you'd beg them. "Try to humble yourself enough to please listen. Please open your heart just this much to maybe it is a prophet. Maybe he really does love you and wants to help you. Maybe this really is from God," right? If you could just beg someone to open their heart that much instead of being so angry."

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:32:14 The way you're describing that, essentially you're quoting Alma 32:27, "Awake and arouse your faculties to an experiment upon my words", recognizing that his words are coming from prophets and apostles. "And exercise a particle of faith."

00:32:29 So now maybe just a brief message to those who are struggling with what we're talking about. I love here that he's not saying you have to come in with this depth of confidence. He's saying, "Can you have a particle of faith even if you can no more than desire to believe?" Can you even open up space, a particle, to even hope that these really are prophets, seers and revelators

like we have throughout all scriptural history? Can you open up that desire? And if you can, let that work in you in a manner "that you can give place." And then I love it. He says, "Even for a portion", can you provide that much space? And if so, then that experiment will work. "It will begin to swell and grow within your heart." And you can come to that deep testimony of prophets, seers and revelators.

00:33:19 And both of you had shared examples where friends who are telling you what you want to hear. Oftentimes we see the language that comes in Mosiah 12 where it says, "to be judged of this man." That's one of the statements, is whatever, you're just judging them. You don't really know them, you're just judging them. Or what we see in chapter 13, when nothing else seems to be working, they'd go to the ad hominem, Whatever. He's crazy. He's mad. And these are some of the attacks, but that kind of sets up. And if it's all right, I'll maybe move us forward here in the storyline.

00:33:53 In chapter 12 now, we're going to come to the second visit where Abinadi comes among them in disguise. And then as we usually talk about, he sort of blows his cover right off the bat and says, "I am Abinadi." But you have to think that at least part of the reason for disguise is to get into the city. Abinadi doesn't strike me as the type who's super nervous about what people are going to think. I picture him, he uses the disguise, he gets in and then it's like, "Here I am, I'm back" and he goes straight into boldly teaching. And it's interesting because the pattern is the same as what we saw in the first visit. He comes among the people, he prophesies, he speaks in the voice of God, the people get angry, and then the people repeat his teachings to the king, and that's where he is going to be taken before the priests and the king. But the message is a little bit different, that the tone of the message is a little bit different at this point.

00:34:47 In the second visit, the message is more declarative. Speaking in the name of the Lord, "I will..." and then we get the message of destruction, the consequences, "You shall, all this will, it shall come upon you. The life of King Noah shall be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace." And this is where he's going to be taken before the priests. And in Mosiah 12 verse 19, "They began to question him that they might cross him. That thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him." But he answered them boldly and he withstood all their questions, "Yea, to their astonishment, he did withstand them in all their questions. And did confound them in all their words."

- 00:35:33 Before we settle into the discourse and his teachings to these priests, I want to hit one more, you mentioned Hank, 30,000 view principle and application. So we have him boldly defending himself, prophesying. If we jump to chapter 13, the king sends the priests and they take him forth and they lay their hands on him. And in chapter 13, verse 3, "Touch me not, for God will smite you if you lay your hands on me. I have not declared the message which the Lord sent me to deliver, neither have I answered your question." And then he goes on in verse 6, it says, "He spake with power and authority from God." In verse 7, "I perceive that the message cuts you to the heart because I tell you the truth." Going back to what President Nelson said, people are filled with wonder, amazement, anger. And then he says, "I finish my message. And then it matters not whither I go. If it so be that I am saved."
- 00:36:28 And then we fast-forward to the end of the story where even bound, ready to be executed, the offer is given. "If you will deny your words, recall your words, you can be spared." Mosiah 17:9. "I will not recall the words which I have spoken unto you concerning this people for they are true. And that they may know of a surety that I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands. I will suffer even until death. I will not recall my words and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if you slay me, you will shed innocent blood. And this shall also stand as a testimony against you at the last day." And then obviously at the end of the chapter, he's going to be killed. And his final words, "Oh God, receive my soul."
- 00:37:11 One of the things that I love in the Book of Mormon is that we have Mormon narrating. And oftentimes he'll jump in with an "and thus we see" comment. And do you remember the comment that he makes in, I think it's Alma 47, the beginning of the war chapters after detailing the influence of Amalickiah. Mormon gives this commentary. He says in verse 9, "We also see the great wickedness one very wicked man can cause to take place among the children of men."
- 00:37:41 I think Mormon would be okay with us paraphrasing this principle with the story of Abinadi saying something like, "We see the great righteousness one very righteous man can cause to take place among the children of men." Not only Abinadi and his influence, but then in chapter 17, there was one among them, these priests, and he believed. And then what does Alma do? He hides out and he begins to write the words of Abinadi. And then what does he do in chapter 18? He begins to teach the words of Abinadi. And it's the words of Abinadi that lead to the conversion of 450 souls at the end of Mosiah 18.

- 00:38:21 And then it's Alma and his son Alma. And then the story of Alma the Younger connected with the sons of Mosiah gets us into the missionary work of the sons of Mosiah and their conversion is going to impact King Lamoni and the Queen, his father and the entire anti-Nephi-Lehi's. And then you have Alma's son, Helaman, and his son Helaman, and then as we mentioned at the beginning of this, the Nephi's. Until finally we get to the end of 3rd and 4th Nephi, the culmination, the climax of the Book of Mormon. This moment and the impact of Abinadi is truly going to transform the rest of Nephite civilization all the way up through 3rd and 4th Nephi.
- John Bytheway: 00:39:05 I like to make a chart. I start with Alma as the foundation. I kind of juxtapose it over an ancient temple, but I'd say look at the impact of Abinadi. Alma the Elder, Alma the Younger, Helaman, leader of the 2,000 warriors, Helaman record keeper chief judge, Nephi, missionary with his brother Lehi, Nephi disciple of Jesus. Some scholars think there might be a fourth Nephi in there. And then Amos son of Nephi, Amos son of Amos, Ammaron brother of Amos, Mormon to Moroni. And then I say, see what I did there? I put Moroni on top of the temple. Ha-ha.
- 00:39:44 But Alma the Elder is 148 BC, this story, and Moroni buries the record in 421 AD. So if I did my math right, 569 years is the impact of Abinadi and the young man, Alma who believed him when he came and talked to King Noah and the wicked priest.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:07 I am right with you there that Alma's decision... We've talked about Abinadi being a prophet, but Alma's decision to open up his heart, there's got to be something in Alma way back in his soul as he's listening going, "He's right." And as he's listening to Abinadi, he's saying, "He's right." But I promise you, there's feelings coming up. "Well, no, because this and this and this. He's not right. This really hurts. If he's right, then I don't feel really good, so I'm going to push those feelings away." But yet here comes those feelings back.
- 00:40:39 And then I have a few friends who have decided to step away from the church and from the prophet, the impact that is going to have, the ripples that are going to spread from this decision. For how many hundreds of years did you say John?
- John Bytheway: 00:40:56 569 years.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:58 500 years. Abinadi's choice and Alma's choice is going to affect the future. If Alma doesn't listen, let's say Alma never listens and how the entire story changes. So John, Ryan, I don't know if anyone's listening who's questioning if they're going to continue

listening to the prophet. But I'm sure with both of you and with the whole book, we would say, "Please, please listen. Humble yourself enough. Open up your heart just enough and say maybe, maybe he's right."

- John Bytheway: 00:41:33 One more thing that I know that you love to quote Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin. He said this about Abinadi. "Another example of the far-reaching effects of an inspired testimony is that of the prophet Abinadi. The testimony he bore as he called an apostate King Noah and his priests to repentance is one of the most significant doctrinal discourses in the Book of Mormon." And we'll get to that. "The king and his priests except one rejected Abinadi's teachings and had it put to death, that one was Alma." Listen to this, "Abinadi may have felt that he failed as a missionary because he had only one convert so far as the record shows." We don't know what Abinadi knew at the time. I hope I want to ask him one day, 'Did you know that anyone had listened?' But what have we got? Alma, Alma, Helaman, Helaman, Nephi, Nephi, possibly another Nephi, Amos, Amos, Ammaron, Mormon, Moroni. Did you know? No, you didn't fail. Look at what happened because of what you did.
- 00:42:32 And as you said, Ryan, he said in verse 9, "It matters not whither I go." It sounds to me like he knew I may not make it out of here alive. What do you guys think?
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:42:43 Yeah, no, I think absolutely. You did it by years. Even just look at the page count. So we're on page 175, I'm old school and have the physical scriptures here and there are 531 pages. We don't have the Book of Mormon without what's to come here, without this conversion of Alma and the impact that he has. If it's all right with you, I want to share for me one of the most profound examples of this principle.
- 00:43:09 So once upon a time, I was a full-time missionary in the New Zealand, Auckland mission. I had been a missionary for about nine months. And I had been in different areas, but the same city. The transfer came that would put me in a new city. And I went to the transfer meeting where you meet your new companion. And the area that I was getting sent to had a reputation for being a hard area. In fact, the missionary who I was replacing came up to me at the church where the transfer was taking place and they said, "Hey, I heard that you're going to this area." And I said, "Yeah, I am." And I'm all excited. And he is like, "I am so sorry." He said, "I've been there for nine months. I've knocked on every door. I've knocked on most of them twice, some of them three times. Nobody is interested.

This area is dead. I told president, we should close it down. I'm so sorry that you have to go to this area."

00:44:02 If you're an arrogant 19-year-old like me at the time, what are you thinking? "Well, step aside. Let me show you how it's done." I go into this area with so much confidence. "Oh, we're going to work hard and we're just going to change the area." So we worked for the entire transfer. We worked harder than I had ever worked as a missionary. We were all in and we had nothing to show for it. We didn't have anyone even in the teaching pool. We had one family we were teaching. They weren't interested, but they liked feeding us and we liked eating so we went over there for dinner, but we weren't actually teaching anyone or seeing anybody progress.

00:44:43 I had this pivotal moment of deep humility where I realized in my own way, "Now I know that I am nothing, which thing I actually never before had supposed." I have this feeling of humility and pray for forgiveness. My companion and I decided to open up a fast for success in this area that we would see the Lord's hand. We wake up the next morning, we pray, continue our fast, and we pulled out a map. Now for our younger listeners, a map is like GPS, but it was on paper. So we pulled out this map and prayerfully considered where should we go. We decided we didn't have anything else to show. We were going to show the Lord we were all in and we were just going to go knock on doors for as long as it took or talk to people in the streets. We made a plan. And as we looked at this map, we both actually settled in on the exact same road independently. So we thought that must be inspiration.

00:45:37 Now we go to this road and we start knocking on doors. And then we look a few doors ahead and we realize that there are two Jehovah's witness missionaries knocking the same street right along the way. So imagine that scene. So you've got two Jehovah's witness missionaries on a Saturday morning knocking on a door, "Hi, we're Jehovah's witnesses. Do you want a pamphlet?" And within two minutes right after them, "Hi, we're missionaries." We're harassing everybody along this street. And it didn't take long before we were like, "This isn't going to work." So much for inspiration, and we went to a different street.

00:46:16 A couple of days later though, we remembered the feeling that we had. We went back to this road, "Maybe the other Jehovah's Witness missionaries, maybe they got tired and didn't make it to the other side of the road. So let's start there." And the second door that we knocked on was the door of a 21-year-old

young man named Neli Sasulu. Neli let us in, and he let us teach a discussion. He had a friend who was a member of the church and was a missionary so he was kind of curious what it was that missionaries did. We had one of the most powerful first discussions that I experienced as a missionary. Neli was so prepared. When we talked about Joseph Smith and we talked about the first vision, the questions he was asking, Neli was connecting with it.

00:47:00 And then we pull out one of the cheap little paperback copies of the Book of Mormon and we said, "Neli, we want to give you a copy of the Book of Mormon." And his eyes got wide and he is like, "I could have that." And we're like, "Yeah, you can have it." So we hand him this and he's just like, "Thank you." And we're like, "Yeah, it's good. Here, read this and we'll come back and talk about it." Then we pray and we end this discussion.

00:47:27 Do you remember those moments and return missionaries in the audience? Do you remember the moments when you float out of a discussion? You have tasted heaven, and that's what it was like. We go to have our follow-up meeting with him and he's not there. We came back the next day and he wasn't there. We came back later that day and he wasn't there, but his parents were. So we started chatting with his parents. And as we're chatting with his parents, Neli pulls up in his car and he says, "Brothers, sorry about the other day. I had something come up and I couldn't find your number." And we said, "Do you have time right now?" And he said, "Yeah, yeah. Come in."

00:48:02 We open up to 3rd Nephi chapter 11, and we start reading about the climax of the Book of Mormon and the Savior's ministry among those in Bountiful and it starts talking about baptism. And we say, "Neli, how do you feel about baptism?" And he said, "Yeah, I think it's really important." And we said, "Yeah, absolutely. So do we. Do you feel like it'd be important for you to be baptized?" And he said, "Yeah, actually I was when I was a little baby." We have another conversation about authority and baptism by immersion. And then we say, Neli, do you think it'd be important for you to be baptized by somebody holding that priesthood authority?" And he says, "Yeah."

00:48:36 "Neli, will you prepare yourself to be baptized by somebody holding that priesthood authority on November 23rd?" I'll never forget that day. And he looks at us and he says, "Yeah. Heck, yeah." But he didn't say heck, but he was in New Zealand and it's not a swear word. So, "Heck yeah." So we make this plan. November 23rd was three weeks from the day that we had this conversation. We laid it out and said, "Okay, on this day we're

going to have a lesson. On this day we're going to come read the Book of Mormon together." Lesson, Book of Mormon, introduce him to members. We had it all planned out.

00:49:08 Some things happened between this time and his baptism. He had a couple of challenges. Some of his friends had given him some anti-Mormon stuff. Well, I guess I should back up. Two months before we happened to knock on his door, he had a feeling that he should stop participating in the after rugby game festivities, partying with his friends. He was a phenomenal rugby player. And he said, "Why is it that my friends were okay with me going out and getting drunk with them, but now I want to join a church and they're all of a sudden worried about my soul?" And he said, "I'm getting baptized." And we're like, "Absolutely."

00:49:43 The day of his baptism comes, and I'll never forget this, this dead area, the entire chapel is full, that the ward comes out. His family's there. His friends are there. So many of those who aren't members of the church. The baptism begins. And I remember after he was baptized, he was on fire. And he said, "Man, it feels like we just won a massive rugby game." And I was like, "I'm sure that's the Holy Ghost." I didn't know what to say.

00:50:10 So we go back, there's one more talk. And then he leans over and he is like, "Hey brothers, is it okay if I say something?" And we're like, "Yeah, it's your baptism." He stands up. He's been baptized for six minutes or something, and he stands up at the pulpit, bears this beautiful testimony about the Savior, about the Restoration. And then he says, "And if anybody wants to know more, talk to the brothers." And he points to us and we're like, "Yep, come talk to us."

00:50:34 The next day he's confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and given the gift of the Holy Ghost. He also receives the Aaronic Priesthood and is ordained a priest. The next week he's called to be a ward missionary. He would come to district meetings with us. He would come to zone meetings with us. He would come to zone conferences with it. So picture this scene where President's there with all these missionaries, he asks a question, Neli raises his hand, shares this great comment. The other missionaries are like, "Wait, who's that?" And we're like, "Huh, it's Neli. Get used to it. He's one of us." He would come tracting with us. In fact, he got us in so many doors because he was so well known. He had this reputation among these people.

00:51:19 I remember we had a referral. There was a brother who his parents were less active members of the church. I think he was 19 years old, and he was never baptized. We knock on his door and he is like, "Nah, I'm not really interested." And then he sees Neli standing behind us and he is like, "Wait, Neli, are you with these guys?" And he is like, "Yeah, man. I was just baptized." And this brother's like, "Oh, come in." And we're like, "Okay." So we go in and we start teaching him. We end up teaching and baptizing three of his brothers, teaching several of his friends. This dead area has this life breathed into it because of the passion that Neli had. People said, "Whatever happened to him, I want to have happen to me." And we started to see miracles.

00:52:06 There are several other parts to the story. Maybe one quick one. We got permission to take Neli and his little brother and one of his buddies down to the visitor center, which was about an hour and a half drive from where we were. Neli was driving. My companion was 6'6" so he was in shotgun. I'm not 6'6" so I'm in the back seat. So it's me, Neli's little brother, and Neli's buddy in this little hatchback car, picture a Geo Metro. We make this drive down to the visitor center. We have a good experience there, but it was the drive home that was such a powerful experience where, as we're driving home talking about the gospel, while Neli's driving, he's sharing his testimony, my companion, Elder Bell, is sharing his testimony, I'm sharing my testimony. These two investigators, or now we call them friends, are in the back and they're sharing their testimony of the restored gospel.

00:53:02 So while we're driving on the freeway crammed in this car, I just look at them in this back seat and I say, "Will you guys prepare to be baptized on January 4th?" And they look at each other and they're like, "Yeah." And they said to each other, "Should we do it together?" And they look at me and they're like, "Can we do it together?" And I was like, "Let's do it together." So we start planning this baptism while we're driving on the freeway. I started calling it a discussion on wheels. You just shove them in the back of a car, drive 70 miles an hour, they can't get out, and you just teach.

00:53:33 Fast-forward now, I'm able to be there when Neli receives the Melchizedek Priesthood and then I come home from my mission. About three months later, I get a letter. And enclosed in this letter is another letter that says something like this, "Dear Elder Neli Sasulu, you are hereby called to serve as a missionary for the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

You're assigned to labor in the Calgary Canada mission." So picture this Samoan brother in Canada.

00:53:58 Comes to the Provo MTC, he flies into Salt Lake on a Saturday. He would enter the MTC on a Wednesday. So he needs a companion. I volunteer. We take him to Temple Square. He looks around and I remember he was just far out. That's what he said, far out. And we're showing him, "Neli, this is the temple. This is the Joseph Smith building. Neli, this is the church administration building. This is where the prophet works." And he looks at us and hits us in the arm, he's like, "Dude, should we go see him?" And I was like, "And now look over here." And we just sort of take him away.

00:54:30 He comes to church with us that Sunday, I drop him off at the MTC. He's two years older than me, but I felt like I was dropping off my own child. "Okay, Neli, remember what we talked about. You're going to work hard and be obedient." And he's like, "Yeah, yeah." So I give him this hug and he walks away and I'm just a mess. And I'm like, "My little boy is all grown up." And he goes into the MTC. The next week I pull into the MTC. I was applying to teach there. And as I pull in, I offer this prayer and I said, "Heavenly Father, I know there are lots of missionaries and lots of buildings and rooms, but Neli is somewhere in this building. It would be amazing if I happened to bump into him while I'm in there."

00:55:13 I walk in and I go down one of the long hallways and as I look up, there are two missionaries walking toward me. That's not uncommon in the MTC actually. And one of them is Polynesian. And as they get closer, I was like, "No way. No way." And I was like, "Neli! I mean Elder Sasulu!" And he looks at me and he goes, "Brother!" And he runs up to me and gives me this hug. And he said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "I'm applying to teach. What are you guys doing out here?" Because they were the only two missionaries in this hallway. Everyone else was in class. And Neli looks at me and he is like, "It was the weirdest thing. We were sitting in class and all of a sudden out of nowhere, my companion got super sick." And I was like, "Oh man, that's my bad. That was my prayer. I'm so sorry."

Hank Smith: 00:56:02 Yeah, "That was my prayer."

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:56:03 "Yeah, sorry." So we chat for three or four minutes and he is like, "Oh, we better get going." They go their way. I go my way. We write throughout his mission. He was this incredible missionary. In fact, I was sitting down for a meeting with some student teachers, seminary teachers, and we're getting to know

each other. We were talking about missions, and I said, "Where'd you serve?" And this brother said, "Canada." I was like, "Oh, which mission?" And he said, "Calgary." I was like, "Well, do you happen to know an Elder Sasulu?" And he looked at me uncomfortably serious and he goes, "How do you know Neli?" I said, "Well, my companion and I were actually able to knock on his door and baptize him in New Zealand." This brother looks at me and he said, "Could I hug you?" So he hugs me and then he said, "That man changed my life." And I said, "I got to know, what was he like?" They were companions.

00:56:50 Everybody knew Neli. Everybody loved Neli. Everybody wanted to be like Neli. And he said, "When we tracted, Neli didn't walk. He sprinted from door to door to door to door to door and brought this fire of the gospel." Neli comes home from his mission, meets and marries his wife. They get sealed in the temple on April 6th, kind of the big day in the church. They have five children and he continues to influence. In fact, when they were moving from New Zealand to Australia, his wife said, "We were supposed to move last week, but he had reactivated his aunt or something, and so he needed to baptize his cousins before we left." And I was like, "Of course. Of course you did."

00:57:30 Before Facebook became big, there was kind of a localized social media program. I'm not making this up, this is what his profile said. "Religious views: LDS through and through. Favorite book: the Book of Mormon. Favorite TV show: General Conference." This is what he has on his profile. And as I've told this story in a number of places, it's amazing how often there's a connection to Neli.

00:57:59 I was in Washington State speaking to a group of probably like 500 youth. And before I even said anything, I had a picture of Neli up behind me on the screen and this kid in the back raises his hand and he's like, "That's Neli Sasulu." And I was like, "Yeah." And he said, "I'm from New Zealand. He's my young men's president." And sort of unsolicited stands starts going on about the impact he had.

00:58:21 I shared it in a BYU education week, and this wonderful middle-aged woman comes up after me with this massive smile on her face and she said, "I know all about him. My son served with him in Canada." A different group, a brother comes up, he was in his 30s, and he said, "I served with Neli. We were in the same zone." And he started... It's just remarkable the impact that he's had.

- 00:58:44 Now, two other kind-of pieces of the story and then we'll get back to Abinadi. In 2008, I got an email from Neli and he told me a story that I wasn't aware of. After he was baptized for a year and had received the Melchizedek Priesthood and had submitted his papers, he received a phone call. The phone call was an invitation to represent Samoa in the Rugby World Cup. And he said, "This is like the NBA finals. This is like the NFL Super Bowl." He's like, "I've wanted this my entire life. Ever since I was a little boy, I dreamed of one day representing Samoa in the Rugby World Cup." And then he said this, this is a direct quote from the email, "But I knew who had rescued me and who my life should be dedicated to, and that is God. So I turned down this once in a lifetime opportunity to serve a mission." And he said, "I wouldn't have it any other way."
- 00:59:39 And then he said, "But brother, I just got a phone call. I was invited to represent Samoa in the upcoming World Cup, but this time they also invited his older brother who he happened to baptize a few months earlier to be on the same team." So now these brothers get to live their childhood dream together. The last part of the story that I'll share is we need to kind-of go back to when I'm still a missionary, Neli's received the Melchizedek Priesthood, but it's pre-mission call. So it's 10:20 at night... Missionaries are supposed to be in the apartment at 9:30, in bed by 10:30. It's 10:20 and I get a text message. The text says, "Sharp, I'm saying goodbye, man. I can't do this anymore. I'm going to the liquor store. I'm going to miss you, brother." And I called him and I said, "Neli, what are you doing?" And he was like, "I'm going to get wasted, brother." And I said, "No, you're not going to get wasted. What's going on?" And he said, "I just can't do it. It's tearing my family apart. I can't do it anymore. This is too hard."
- 01:00:37 And he kept going on saying the same thing. So I asked him where he was and he said he was at this park, which is about 20, 25 minutes from our apartment. And I said, "Neli, I'm going to be there in 10 minutes." And I said, "Don't you dare go to the liquor store until I get there." And he said, "They're going to be closed." And I said, "See you soon" and I just hung up on him. I called President. At this point, it's like 10:40, 10:45. I called my mission president and I said, "President," and I explained the situation and he said, "Brother Sharp," he just said, "it's not good for you to be out that late." And then he paused and it felt like an eternity. It was probably five seconds. "Brother Sharp, it's not good for you to be out that late. Just drive safely."
- 01:01:18 "Thanks, President." And we fly to the park. We show up there and there's Neli in the pitch black in the middle of this park

sitting on a 12 pack of beer with his face buried in his hands. And we sit down next to him, "What's going on?" And he said, "I just can't do it anymore. It's tearing my family apart." We talked to him about it and we talked to him about the adversary's attempts to stop him from becoming the missionary that we knew he could be and the man of God that he was becoming.

01:01:46 Finally, after chatting for about a half hour, we just said, "Should we pray?" And he's like, "Let's pray." So picture this scene, 11:30 at night, probably pitch black, a guy sitting on a 12 pack of beer and two missionaries in full proselyting clothes praying in this park. After we finish the prayer, we get a phone call from President and he says, "Where are you guys at?" And we tell him and he said, "Okay, bring him up to the mission home." We're walking to the car. He's got this 12 pack of beer and he looks at us and he looks at this beer and he looks back at us and he just throws it into this garbage can.

01:02:19 We get in the car, we take him to the mission home and President talks to him for several minutes and he said, "Neli, you have learned that there is a very real power out there, and that power is going to try to stop you. But you have to know there is always a power that is stronger, and that is the power of God. And I think it'd be appropriate that we call on that power right now." And he lays his hands on Neli's head and gives him this incredible blessing. And then Neli goes on a mission and then he becomes the man that I've been talking to you about.

01:02:49 So when I think the impact of one person, and I continue to tell that story to my classes, and every semester I get emails from students, "Because of that story and because of Neli's example, I want to go on a mission. I want to experience what he experienced." So I have such a strong testimony of the power that one person can make if they turn their life over to the Lord. And that's one of the most beautiful examples that I could think of. And I apologize. I know it took longer than we usually would, but I love that faith and the impact that he had.

Hank Smith: 01:03:25 I have to ask you, Ryan, was that the same mission president you told us about last year in your episode?

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 01:03:32 Yeah. So President Dirk Smibert, one of my heroes, passed away 10 years ago this past March.

Hank Smith: 01:03:39 Yeah, I remember you telling us last year you did your lesson on Matthew 9 and 10, Mark 5. We should encourage everyone to

go back and listen to that episode. You can get those two stories side by side. Really fun.

- John Bytheway: 01:03:53 God is in the details. I remember sitting in the Marriott Center as an Elders Quorum president at BYU and Elder Maxwell came, so go way back, that's how old I am. He said that the macro plan of salvation is composed of millions of micro plans and that God manages the intersections of our lives. Where we go and people we meet and when we meet them, he said, these are all managed by our Heavenly Father and his remarkable son, who in the acme of understatement said, "I am able to do my work." I'm writing it in my Franklin planner as fast as I could.
- 01:04:30 That's a testimony of that. That that area was you thought dead, God had somebody and sent you to them. I hope listeners feel the love of God sending you there, sending Abinadi to these people when he could have given up on them, giving them another chance. And anybody listening in a bad place, God is sending you faith and testimony today to hear that story. And now the story of Neli has blessed me too.
- Hank Smith: 01:05:00 Yeah. Maybe Neli is listening. If Neli ever hears this episode, Neli, we love you. followHIM are fans of Neli. Ryan, what would you tell him right now if he's listening?
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 01:05:10 Going back to what that brother who said, "That man changed my life," I just feel the same. I was actually texting Neli yesterday, so I asked him if I could share it. And I love Neli and his wonderful wife, Zoe, and they're incredible kids. They're just an amazing family who has impacted the Sharp family.
- Hank Smith: 01:05:28 I love it. That's a modern day of Abinadi and Alma. But we're glad you're still around.
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 01:05:34 Thank you.
- John Bytheway: 01:05:37 Please join us for part 2 of this podcast.



200 Foot Drop!



GUEST: RYAN SHARP

- John Bytheway: 00:00:00 Welcome to part two with Dr. Ryan Sharp, Mosiah chapters 11 through 17.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:07 What a fantastic way to look at the overall picture of these chapters. Should we hone in now on some specific pieces, zoom in at what you want to see specifically in this story?
- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:00:20 Absolutely. I appreciate it, especially now getting into the actual words of Abinadi, the teachings of Abinadi, his discourse, what he says to the priests and to Noah. Elder McConkie once said, "Our understanding of the prophetic word will be greatly expanded if we know how one prophet quotes another, usually without acknowledging his source." From a biblical study's perspective, this is called intertextuality. If I were to give a talk or give a lesson, and I wanted to make a point, but I wanted to make sure there was authority with that point that I was making, what would I do? Well, I would probably find a quote from the prophet or a scripture.
- 00:01:00 Writers of scripture did the exact same thing. They would draw upon the writings of previous prophets. We know that later, writers of the Book of Mormon had many of these messages. In Alma 63:12, it says, "And now behold all those engravings which were in the possession of Helaman were written and sent forth among the children of men throughout all the land." What I want to look at now for this kind of second half is not just the legacy of Abinadi, the man, and his impact on Alma and what we talked about there, really the eternal legacy that he passed along there, but I want to look at the legacy of his words and his teachings throughout the rest of the Book of Mormon. Here, I'm going to draw on the incredible work of our friend and colleague Dr. John Hilton III, who makes an incredibly compelling case that many of the later writers in the Book of Mormon are pretty clearly borrowing from the teachings of Abinadi.

- 00:02:01 Here are a few examples. Alma the Younger, think for a second, why would Alma maybe feel an affinity for the writings of Abinadi? There are some unique phrases that show up. For example, in Alma 12, "All mankind became a lost and a fallen people." This is almost word for word drawing uniquely from the writings of Abinadi. These lines that I'm giving you, these aren't just common phrases that show up all over in the Book of Mormon. They show up one or two times, and it's this link between Abinadi and these later writers. Listen to this one in Alma 12, "Raised from this mortality to a state of immortality being brought before the bar of God to be judged according to our works," almost word for word what Abinadi says in Mosiah 16.
- 00:02:48 We also have Amulek. Amulek is connected to Alma, who was connected obviously to his father Alma, who was converted by the teachings of Abinadi. You get unique phrases like, "As though there was no redemption made, or loosing the bands of death." These are unique phrases that connect Abinadi and Mormon. Think of Mormon who has access to all of these writings on all of these plates. He's going to draw heavily from Abinadi saying things like, "Christ breaketh the bands of death. The grave shall have no victory. The sting of death swallowed up." Later in 3 Nephi 26, what I'm about to read, this entire statement is verbatim Mosiah 16:10. So, it says in 3 Nephi 26, "All will stand before God to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil. If they be good, to the resurrection of everlasting life, and if they be evil, to the resurrection of damnation."
- 00:03:49 Because of the number of words there and the copy and paste, there's clearly this connection between Abinadi and Mormon. One of the places that we find the most textual relationships between Abinadi and a later writer is going to be Alma the younger, specifically when Alma is speaking to his son Corianton. Think about that for a second. Alma is trying to figure out, "How do I deal with this son who has committed some pretty serious sins? How do I do that?" Well, how did Abinadi do that when he was speaking to a people who were living in sin? You'd find several examples like standards of testimony against you at the last day. That's Alma 38:8, the trifecta of carnal, sensual, and devilish. This is taken from Mosiah 16. "Were it not for the redemption," again, this is a unique word that shows up in Abinadi, and now Alma speaking to his son Corianton.
- 00:04:49 Maybe just one more. There are over 20 different textual connections between Abinadi and the writings of King Benjamin, phrases like, "An enemy to God, salvation cometh to

none such." Listen to the number of words here. This is King Benjamin, but again, the same phrase shows up in Abinadi, "But the time shall come when the knowledge of a savior shall spread forth throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people," and then he goes on from there. There are so many examples where Abinadi and King Benjamin are the only ones to use this language, and because of the number of connections, or it seems like King Benjamin has access to, in some way, the writings of Abinadi. Now, our listeners may be thinking, "Wait a minute, didn't King Benjamin come before Abinadi?" But remember, if you look at the date, Abinadi actually comes first.

00:05:46 John Hilton speaking to this said, "Based on the Nephites' timeline presented by Mormon, King Benjamin gave his address about 124 B.C. In contrast, no explicit dating information is given about when Abinadi spoke. Nevertheless, through contextual clues, we can approximately determine this information. Alma died in 91 B.C. at the age of 82. Thus, Alma was born in 173 B.C. He was a young man", it says, "at the trial of Abinadi, and this is Mosiah 17. Unless the definition of young man is stretched to include one who is 50 years old", which may be, "Abinadi clearly spoke before King Benjamin's address in 124 B.C. If we assume young man was about 20 years old, Abinadi would've spoken in 153 B.C. approximately 30 years before King Benjamin". So, I would invite the audience to study the words of Abinadi and the words of King Benjamin to look for these textual connections.

00:06:46 There are so many. In fact, many of them show up when King Benjamin is quoting the angel, which has led some to speculate, "Was Abinadi the angel?"

John Bytheway: 00:06:59 I really want to believe that. I think it would be really cool.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:07:03 There's zero evidence other than that there is clearly a textual connection. Abinadi had passed away, so it is plausible, but the bottom line is two of the most powerful discourses we have in the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin and Abinadi, there's this intertextual relationship that I think is beautiful and shows the effect not just of Abinadi's life, but of Abinadi's teachings.

John Bytheway: 00:07:27 Years ago, I was down at Deseret Industries. I found a 1952 children's friend. The cover story was "How I Painted the Book of Mormon Paintings" by Arnold Friberg.

Hank Smith: 00:07:39 Oh wow.

John Bytheway: 00:07:40 Some pretty cool things in there about the Abinadi painting that we're familiar with. What is the brightest spot in the painting? It's Abinadi's face, which it says in the text, his face shown even as Moses's did. What is the most colorful spot in the painting? It's King Noah with his different colored fabrics. He wanted to paint Abinadi in earth tones, but his glory was outshining every worldly thing in the room. I like to show this painting and say, "Look at the wicked priests. Where's the young man, because they all look kind of old?" They asked Carole Mikita once from Channel five news in between sessions. She asked Arnold Friberg when he was still alive, "Which one's the young man?"

00:08:25 I always imagine that this fellow over here, he went off to the right in the shadows. We talked earlier about art. Walter Rane, R-A-N-E, did a series of Book of Mormon paintings, and the painting is so different. King Noah is much skinnier. He's sitting cross-legged on a platform. Abinadi is being yanked out by the hair, but it's short, and he's young. Alma the Elder is running away, but the painting I love is Mosiah 18, Alma at the Waters of Mormon. So, 148 B.C., this young man is defending Abinadi. 91 B.C. Alma the Younger says, "My father died 57 years of age." We now have all the numbers we need. What's the difference between 148 BC and 91 BC? 57 years. How old was he when he died? 82 minus 57 is 25.

00:09:18 So, I get Alma the Elder, was 25 when he defended Abinadi, the young man. One more thing, I read somewhere John Welch had published about when they were a group of judges, the youngest one would often speak first because of the cultural respect for your elder's idea. If the eldest judge spoke first, all the other judges would just agree with him. Brother Welch suggested, "Could it be that because this was a group of judges, the youngest one spoke first, and that's why Alma the Elder is the first one that appears in Mosiah 17 that started to defend Abinadi?" So, I just thought, "Here's a young man, stood up for what he believed, defended Abinadi, and the whole Book of Mormon has changed."

Hank Smith: 00:10:03 I love it. It takes a lot of courage to be Abinadi, to be the prophet. It also takes a lot of courage to be Alma, to be the one standing up saying, "I believe in this prophet."

John Bytheway: 00:10:14 "He has spoken the truth concerning our iniquities", talking about being willing to hear truth.

Hank Smith: 00:10:22 As I'm reading in Mosiah 12, it ties back to what we were saying at the beginning of the episode, and that is people don't love prophets who say things that aren't smooth, that are a little

rough to hear. Doesn't that seem to be the question that they come up with? John, you've showed me this where they say, "Hey, you're a prophet, right?" "Yeah, I'm a prophet." "Didn't Isaiah say prophets are supposed to say peaceful, good tidings?" Is that what you see happening here?

- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:10:51 I think so, and there are a couple of ways to read this. In fact, as I've tried to understand this over the years, I think that there are really two questions that are asked in chapter 12 that really frame Abinadi's teachings, and this is the first one. So, question one is Mosiah 12:20, and it came to pass that one of them said, "What meaneth the words which are written and which have been taught by our fathers saying," and then they're going to quote Isaiah 52:7 through 10. For us, it's Mosiah 12 beginning in 21, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publishes salvation, that saith unto Zion thy God reigneth. Thy watchman shall lift up the voice, and the voice together they shall sing." Then it goes on, "Break forth into joy. Sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem. For the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of the nation."
- 00:11:52 So, one way of interpreting that is exactly what you're saying, and that is, "Wait, wait, wait. Peace, joy, singing, salvation, happy, that is not Abinadi's message." That's not landing that way with them. "You're telling us his life is going to be valued as a fire, the furnace. That's not what I'm hearing here." So, I think that is one way of looking at it. One of our colleagues, Dr. Joe Spencer, has suggested perhaps the priests here are doing some likening. In Isaiah 52 in its original context, remember that some of the leading Jews were taken into Babylonian captivity, the exilic period, the exile, and then they would be restored to their homeland that was prophesied of, and that restoration led them to praising the Lord and his strength and such.
- 00:12:48 What Joe Spencer and others have suggested is what if they're viewing themselves as a fulfillment of that same prophecy? Well, we are back in the land of our first inheritance. Look around. The Lord is clearly blessing us. We are prospering. Clearly, God is pleased with what we're doing. So this first question, what meaneth the words which are written, Abinadi is going to get back to that. In fact, one thing that I would recommend that might be helpful because Abinadi, if you noticed in the text, he doesn't give his answer to that question for another couple of verses. It might be helpful if you're sitting down with your scriptures. I just bracketed in Mosiah 12:21

through 24, and wrote the cross-reference to Isaiah if you fast-forward to Mosiah 15:10, where we're going to see a textual connection with Isaiah 53, and we'll get there in just a second.

00:13:47 Who shall declare this generation? Then down in verse 14, it says, "And these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation, and said unto Zion, "Thy God reigneth." When he's asking this question, who shall be his seed? Ties back to what we were saying earlier. Whoever has heard the words of the prophets, those who have hearkened unto the words of the prophets, are not these his seed? These are they who are publishing peace. Verse 15 of Mosiah 15, "How beautiful upon the mountains were their feet?" Again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that are still publishing peace including Abinadi? Verse 17, and again, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who shall hereafter publish peace?"

00:14:33 Then finally verse 18, "I say unto you, this is not all. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him-" We might say a capital H, Him, "that bringeth good tidings that is the founder of peace". In verses 29 through 31, Abinadi is going to bookend with Isaiah 52 again. He is going to answer that question, but it's going to be a couple of chapters later. So, I thought it might be helpful to draw that connecting line so they can see the answer to that question.

Hank Smith: 00:15:05 It feels like they asked the question, and he doesn't really answer it. He created a wonderful multi-chapter argument to answer their question. He's a gifted speaker.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:15:16 Absolutely. Now going back, I mentioned there are two questions. This was the first one. After they quote Isaiah going back to Mosiah 12, Abinadi stands, and this is where he gets his shots in, "Are you priests, and pretend to teach this people?" I have to wonder if he's intentionally using that word, because back in verse 12, they said that Abinadi is pretending that the Lord has spoken it. I wonder if he's like, "You want to talk about pretending." Then he goes on verse 20, and I probably make him a little snarkier than he is.

Hank Smith: 00:15:48 I project my snarkiness onto him all the time.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:15:52 Verse 27, "You have not applied your hearts to understanding. What teach you this people?" They say proudly, "The law of Moses. We teach the law of Moses." Then Abinadi, "If you teach the law of Moses, why do you not keep it? Why do you set your

hearts upon riches? Why do you commit whoredoms?" I would invite all of us to consider what commandments is he referencing here? "Why do you set your hearts upon riches? This is your God. You're committing whoredoms. You're spending your strength with harlots. You're causing these people to commit sin." Then he says in verse 30, "Know ye not that I speak the truth." When I get to that verse, I wonder... I don't know if you guys have ever thought this as well, but at what point do you think Alma has his heart pricked? I wonder if it's there, where he's like, "know, ye not that I speak the truth."

00:16:43 You could see that settling. We don't know. But at some point in this, Alma's heart is softening, and he's paying attention. Then we get to the second question in verse 31, about halfway through verse 31, "And what know ye concerning the law of Moses? Doth salvation come by the law of Moses? What say ye?" So again, the first question, what meaneth these words? The second question, doth salvation come by the law? Everything that Abinadi is talking about moving forward is answering these two questions. So, they say, "Yes, salvation comes by the law." Abinadi concedes, "Well, yeah, you've got to keep the law. You've got to keep the commandments," but then he digs in, and he says, "Speaking of the law, let's think about that."

00:17:31 He starts going into the 10 Commandments, and he says... This is Mosiah 12:33, "I know if you keep the commandments of God, you shall be saved. If you keep the commandments, which the Lord delivered unto Moses in the Mount Sinai saying," and then he's going to go into it. Verse 35, "Thou shalt have no other God before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." I love Abinadi in the next verse, "Have you done this? Have you avoided making..." I don't know if he's looking around. I don't know what the scene looked like, but he's calling them out for breaking these commandments, and that's what leads them in chapter 13 to say, "Whatever. He's crazy." I don't know if you guys have had conversations like that, but sometimes when people backed into a corner, that's the line. It's like, "Whatever. They're crazy anyway."

00:18:16 This is where in chapter 13, they try to take him, and he boldly withstands them. I love in Mosiah 13:5, I love it when it says, "Now, it came to pass. Abinadi had spoken these words that the people of King Noah durst not lay their hands on him, for the spirit of the Lord was upon him, and his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses's did while in the Mount of Sinai while speaking with the Lord, and he spake with power and authority from God." I'm so thankful for that narrative

insertion where we're talking law of Moses. Abinadi started quoting the commandments. He's going to pick back up in verse 12 of chapter 13, and he's going to walk through the rest of the commandments, "Thou shalt not make any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." That's verse 15.

00:19:06 Verse 16, "Remember the Sabbath Day." Verse 20, "Honor thy father and thy mother. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet." So, he's going to go through these commandments. While this scene is there, Abinadi is quoting the commandments. Mormon gives this little jewel where he is like, "And while he's doing this, his face was shining just like Moses's was on Mount Sinai." Here, you have these priests, and here standing in front of them is the new Moses citing the commandments, declaring in the name of the Lord, warning the people. We're going to look a little bit later on about types and shadows. Here, Abinadi is a type of Moses, and they're blind to it to bring us full circle. They don't see that connection.

Hank Smith: 00:19:56 Well, that's a great connection. We have Moses receiving these 10 commandments. His face is shining. Abinadi giving, reciting these 10 commandments, his face is shining, and they're not seeing it. I love it. Ryan, would it be okay to say that he's saying, "Let's go through these 10 commandments?" He gets through two, and they're going, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, we don't want to hear this anymore." He said, "Oh no, we're going through all 10. Don't touch me. We've got eight more to go."

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:20:25 This is Mosiah 13:3, "I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me." Then I love when he says, "Neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell you. I haven't even answered your question yet. We're not done. I'm going to keep going," and he does. But again, later he's going to answer that question, but it feels like he's saying, "But I've got more to say before we get to that."

00:20:47 So, he's going to continue talking about the law of Moses in Mosiah 13:27, "And now, you have said that salvation cometh by the law of Moses. I say unto you that it's expedient that you should keep the law of Moses as yet, but I say unto you that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the law of Moses." Moreover, I say to you that salvation doth not come by the law alone, and were it not for the atonement which God himself shall make for the sins and iniquities of his people that they must unavoidably perish notwithstanding law

of Moses." Then he is going to go on in verses 29 and 30 and say, "Here's why the law was given us that they were a stiff-necked people, quick to do iniquities, slow to remember the Lord their God. The law was given to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty toward him."

00:21:33 Then he says, "All these things were types of things to come." Verse 33, "But behold did not Moses." Again, he's playing to their ego and their understanding. "You want to talk about Moses. Well, didn't Moses prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began, have they not spoken more or less concerning these things? Have they not said God himself shall come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth? Yeah, and have they not said also that he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he himself should be oppressed and afflicted?"

00:22:18 Now, before we move on to chapter 14, I wanted to point out a phrase that's been repeated here twice. In Mosiah 13:28, "Were it not for the atonement?" Then it says, "Which God himself shall make." In verse 34, "Have they not said that God himself shall come down and suffer these things?" If you jump over to chapter 15:1, Abinadi said unto them, "I would that you should understand that God himself shall come down." Then if we jump ahead one more time to chapter 17 where Abinadi has now finished his discourse, Noah is with the priests, and they're consulting for three days, "What should we do with them?" After these three days, Mosiah 17:6, "After three days, they counseled with the priests. He caused that they should again be brought before him, and he said unto him, "Abinadi, we have found an accusation against thee, and thou art worthy of death for thou hast said that God himself shall come down."

00:23:26 It is that teaching that will eventually become Abinadi's death sentence, that God himself is going to come down, and he's going to suffer and atone and be oppressed and afflicted. To underscore this point, what's Abinadi going to do? "Well, priests, you went Isaiah. I'm going to go Isaiah. Because you quoted Isaiah 52, can I remind you of what comes in 53?" Then in Mosiah 14... So, this is sometimes called the suffering servant. In Mosiah 14:3, "He is despised, rejected of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He's despised. We esteemed him not. He's borne our griefs, carried our sorrows, stricken, smitten, afflicted, wounded, bruised, on and on, bears our iniquities, poured out his soul. He made intercession for the

transgressors." Abinadi is teaching them here, "This is who the Messiah is going to be."

00:24:36 Just like the Jews in Jesus' day had a different idea of what they were expecting with the Messiah, it seems that the priests of King Noah's court also lack this understanding. To be fair, Peter lacked this understanding. This was hard for people to understand. The expectation was the Messiah is going to come in great power, and he's going to be this political leader who's going to free us from this oppression that we have so that when Jesus comes and now remember that scene where he's standing before Pilate, and he's bound, and the people are crying out, "Crucify him, crucify him," this can't be the Messiah, because our Messiah is going to break the bonds of oppression. Think of Peter in Matthew 16, "Thou art the Christ, the Messiah, the son of the living God," but it's the same exact chapter that Jesus is going to prophesy and say, "I'm going to be taken, and I'm going to be killed, and I'm going to rise again the third day."

00:25:36 What does Peter say? "Be it far from thee, Lord." No. No. No. There is no way that's going to happen. Jesus's response, "Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou were an offense unto me." Like, "You don't get it yet. I have to do this." This is Abinadi's message that it is a condescended Christ who is the true Messiah, one who is condescended below all things. In verse five, he's going to say, "He suffereth temptation. He yieldeth not to temptation, but he suffereth himself to be mocked and scourged and cast out and disowned by his people." In verse seven, "Even so, he shall be led, crucified and slain, the flesh becoming subject unto death." Helping them understand the doctrinal truth that the Messiah who would come in his first coming, it would be a condescending Christ, a condescending Savior who would suffer these things, and atone so that he could then conquer death, and lead to the true freedom and liberation that they were seeking.

John Bytheway: 00:26:45 I have a note from something that was published in FARMS about Abinadi by Todd Parker. Let's look at the name Abinadi. These people had Hebrew background. In Hebrew, AB, Ab means father. ABI means my father, and Nadi is present with you. So, the name Abinadi may reflect his mission. It may mean something like my father is present with you. That is actually why they said they killed him, because he said God would come down and would be with men. That's the charge of blasphemy they finally used to put him to death. I don't know if you've heard that before, but instead of just agreeing to disagree, why do they want to kill people? It sounds like are they trying to use some sort of charge of blasphemy, and that's why they're

justifying that they could kill him because he said God would come down among men?

- Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:27:40 Yeah, I think if you go back to Mosiah 7, in verse 26, it says, "And a prophet of the Lord had they slain," speaking of Abinadi, "Yea a chosen man of God who told them of their wickedness and abominations, and prophesied of many things which are to come, yea, even the coming of Christ." Because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning, or in other words he said that man was created after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth. Now, because he said this, they did put him to death, and many more things did they do, which brought down the wrath of God upon them.
- 00:28:26 It seems pretty clear that this is the death sentence. It is this teaching, this true teaching that he would condescend and suffer these things. That's what led to them eventually feeling justified, making the decision to take his life. I just want to share one more thought with this idea that Abinadi is teaching that God himself shall come down, and like it says in chapter 13:34, "Come forth among the children of men, and take upon him the form of men, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth." Then it goes on and says, "He himself will be oppressed and afflicted." We were speaking earlier about Abinadi's textual legacy and the impact of his words. I have to wonder... We already talked about the connection between he and King Benjamin.
- 00:29:16 I wonder if this is in part where Benjamin or the angel is quoting, "Shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and go forth amongst men working mighty miracles, and lo, he shall suffer temptations and pain of body, hunger, thirst, fatigue even more than man can suffer except to be unto death, for behold, blood cometh from every pore. So great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people," or is it possible that Alma and Alma seven when he's speaking to those in Gideon, he'll go forth suffering pains, afflictions, temptations? He'll take upon him death that he may lose the bands of death. He will take upon him infirmities that their bowels may be filled with mercy according to the flesh. Again, the emphasis, he is going to become a man that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.

- 00:30:07 "The spirit knoweth all things" he could know these things by revelation. "Nevertheless, the son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he may take upon him the sins of his people." I wonder if Abinadi's teachings here influence some of those verses that I think we're very familiar with and we quote often, but it was Abinadi who is emphasizing that he would come forth, take upon him a mortal tabernacle and suffer. For our listeners, I hope that we see the theological value of this truth, that the reality is that Christ has condescended below all things. There's nothing that we have felt, there's no pain that we've suffered, there's no fear that we've experienced that Christ hasn't felt. He is condescended below all of this so that we can come boldly to the throne of grace, and find strength and help and healing.
- 00:31:05 I want to illustrate this with a couple of stories. The first one was told by Elder Jay E. Jensen in general conference several years ago in a talk called Arms of Safety. I think it's 2009. He told the story about a family who was visiting the Grand Canyon, and they were doing what you do at the Grand Canyon, taking pictures and enjoying the beautiful landscape. There was some railing up by the edge of the cliff to try to keep everybody safe, but a little two-year-old girl had slid through the rails, and she fell down 35 feet. She had rolled to where she was five feet from another drop that would go down 200 feet. So, you have all of these people at the top of this cliff gasping. I mean, imagine this scene. When all of a sudden this 19-year-old young man named Ian, he says, who is trained as an EMT comes down this cliff, and goes and sits with this little girl.
- 00:31:57 The story says he held her in his arms for about an hour until the emergency response team could come and safely get both of them there. Elder Jensen made the point that that phrase held her in his arms had an impact on him, because the scriptures talk about arms. They talk about arms of mercy, arms of safety, being encircled about eternally in the arms of his love, or clasped in the arms of Jesus for those who are struggling and those who are hurting, the reality of the Savior's atonement, because he condescended below all things in these moments, you can experience those arms in this life. It doesn't have to be the next life when we first feel the power of the arms of safety or the arms of mercy. Whether it's unrepented of sin, we can come to the Savior, and truly experience the arms of mercy.
- 00:32:52 If it's a difficult trial, we can experience the arms of love and compassion. I love that truth. It's a second story that I want to share that I hope will highlight the reality of the Savior's grace, and the reality that He continues to love even when we mess

up. Several years ago, my boys were playing upstairs. We have a bonus room upstairs, and we used to make that the playroom. So we would say, "All right, kids, go play." They were only three or four minutes in when all of a sudden, my second son comes down crying, and he said, "Dad, Bubba hit me." He calls his brother Bubba. "Dad, Bubba hit me." I said, "All right, Braxton, son, come sit down." Braxton is sitting on stair four, and I'm standing at the bottom of the stairs if you can visualize this. I was like, "Okay, son, what happened?"

00:33:44 He's like, "Well, he took my toy," so they're probably five and three at the time. "Well, he took my toy." I was like, "And?" He's like, "And so I hit him." I was like, "And that's the part we need to talk about, son. Hands are for loving and giving a high five and throwing a football, and these are all the nice things you can do with your hands. You can't hit your brother." He's like, "I'm sorry, I know I shouldn't have hit him. I promise I won't ever do it again." I was like, "You promise?" He's like, "Yes, just give me another chance. I promise I won't do it anymore." "Good, son. See that you don't. Now, go play." To be honest, I'm strutting around the house feeling like father of the year. I was thinking, "Man, I nailed that."

00:34:33 Within five minutes, Logan comes down again. "Dad, he pushed me over." "Okay, Braxton, come here," in the exact same spot. "Son, do you remember five minutes ago, you were sitting here, and I was standing here?" "Yeah." "Do you remember what I said?" "That I shouldn't hit him anymore." "Do you remember what you said?" "That I wouldn't do it anymore." "What did you do?" "I did it again." "Do you see where I'm going with this, son?" He's like, "I was frustrated. I'm sorry, I won't do it anymore. Just please, can I have another chance?" "For real, bud, you cannot do this anymore. "Okay. Okay, just give me another..." They go up and play. They make it like 20 or 30 minutes this time when again he starts crying again. "Braxton, come here." He sits down on the stairs, and I'm thinking in my mind, "How are we doing this right now, this same thing again?"

00:35:25 He's like, "I'm sorry, I won't do it anymore." I was like, "I know you won't do it anymore, because now you need to go to your room, son." He makes the long walk of shame over to his bedroom. Now, I sit down on the stairs pretty close to where he was sitting, and I've got my face buried in my hands. "What is wrong with my child?" Almost immediately, I get this impression, "Ryan, what is wrong with you?" I was like, "That was unnecessary. We're not talking about me. We're talking about my delinquent five-year-old here," and then it hits me. How many times have I gone before Heavenly Father, and in all

sincerity said, "Heavenly Father, I am so sorry for this? Please forgive me." What does he do? He forgives me, and I tell him I'm never going to do it again.

00:36:18 What do I do? I do it again. Heavenly Father, please forgive me. For real this time, I won't do it anymore." What does he do? He forgives me. While I'm sitting on those stairs, I was reminded of the hymn, "I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me." Do you remember the next phrase? Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me. Because of the condescension of Jesus Christ, we can always come back. There is no sin that's been committed that's beyond the scope of the Savior's grace. I believe that with all my heart. I've experienced that, the hope that comes because of who Jesus was, and because of the depths of his atonement.

Hank Smith: 00:37:05 Ryan, thank you so much for that. I'm glad to hear that I'm not the only parent that is having these discussions over and over and over, but I can see the Lord saying the same thing with me. Yes. Yes, you're getting some experience that I've had with you. One thing that I've noticed quite a bit this year that I don't think I've ever noticed before is how mind-blowing it is to these people that God himself is going to come down. That's something that we've all grown up with. This is not news, but it seems to be news to Nephi when the angel tells him, "Behold the condescension of God." When King Benjamin says, "I've received this from an angel, that God is going to come to earth." Alma 7, Alma's going to say the same thing.

00:37:52 I don't want to lose the wow of the fact that Jehovah, the God we worship, you mean He's coming here to be with us, to be like us. Why? Gods don't do that. That's not something Gods do. This one is.

John Bytheway: 00:38:09 To be willing to be horribly mistreated because of love for us, it is a confusing and I stand all amazed type story, isn't it?

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:38:21 Another example of that, Hank, is the brother of Jared. Do you remember when he sees the finger of the Lord, and he's like, "Wait a minute." They did not understand that.

Hank Smith: 00:38:31 With that, Ryan, let's move into 15. This can be a confusing chapter for some.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:38:37 Yeah, absolutely. So as we look at chapter 15, it begins, and now verse one, Abinadi said unto them, "I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the

children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in the flesh, he shall be called the Son of God, having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son, the Father because he was conceived by the power of God, the Son because of the flesh thus becoming the Father and the Son." Then in verse four, "And they are one God, the Eternal Father in heaven, the flesh becoming subject to the spirit, the Son to the Father being one God." So, this has led some readers of the Book of Mormon and definitely some critics of the Book of Mormon to conclude that maybe this is a Trinitarian type doctrine, that maybe Abinadi's understanding of what we would call the Godhead looked a little bit different.

00:39:25 However, if we look at it in context, I think there is a really helpful way of approaching these verses that make it a little more simple and that align beautifully with what our core doctrinal understanding is of the members of the Godhead. If we make the assumption that this is talking about Heavenly Father and Jesus, then you can absolutely see some confusion and crossover. But if I'm making the assumption that Abinadi is talking about Jesus on both counts, but he's talking about the two parts of Jesus, the divine side and the mortal side, Jesus is the only-begotten son of the Father, a divine, eternal, heavenly being, a God, and a mortal mother, Mary.

00:40:17 So from His divine father, He inherited certain attributes. From His mortal mother, he inherited certain attributes. If we focus on these verses looking at the fact that it's talking about Jesus and these two sides to him, then I think it makes more sense.

Hank Smith: 00:40:36 Ryan, I think you're right on here. With people, I've tried to explain these verses to, it's hard for them when I say, "Take your definition of the Father as God the Father, take that out of the equation." That's hard. Like, "Wait. What?" Yeah, take that out of the equation. That's not what he's talking about. It really makes it much more simple to understand.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:41:00 Beautiful. So if we're looking at words like flesh and son representing the mortal side of him, and father and spirit representing the divine side, then let's look at the verses again. Because He, Jesus, dwelleth in the flesh, He shall be called the Son of God, having subjected the flesh, His mortal side, to the will of the Father, His divine side, being the Father and the son. This is really, I think, what clarifies it, because he was conceived by the power of God. Jesus was conceived by the power of God. In that sense, he's got this divinity within him, and the son because of the flesh, this mortal side, thus becoming the father and the son.

Hank Smith: 00:41:42 When it says becoming the Father and the son, he's both divine and mortal.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:41:48 Once we see that, I think it becomes really clear, especially if you look at verse five, that's the flesh, the mortal side becoming subject to the spirit, or the Son to the father being one God. We're talking about one person, Jesus, but we're talking about these two parts of Him, this divine and this mortal.

John Bytheway: 00:42:07 This is one of those places where the synopsis is really helpful to do the 30,000-foot view before you get really close. So, the first phrase, how Christ is both the Father and the Son, these verses are about Christ. When you see that, and then you read it, you have to slow down, and then you read it. You see what you're talking about. He's got a divine component, immortal component. He shall come and redeem. So you go, "Okay, He's the Redeemer." These verses are about Christ. That's always helped me.

Hank Smith: 00:42:36 It might be confusing to someone to say, "Well, why call him the father?" Well, he's called the father frequently throughout scripture. According to King Benjamin, "This day, he has spiritually begotten you." Where is that?

John Bytheway: 00:42:49 The father of our rebirth, so we become the children of Christ.

Hank Smith: 00:42:53 Who calls him the father of salvation.

John Bytheway: 00:42:55 The father of heaven and earth is a reference to the creator. So, that's another way he's called the father.

Hank Smith: 00:43:03 So, that can be confusing. I can see a listener going, "You're telling me the Father, capital F, is not talking about God the Father?" No, it is not, at least not in this case.

John Bytheway: 00:43:14 Read the synopsis first. This is all about Christ in these first three verses.

Hank Smith: 00:43:19 He is both divine and mortal. Man, Ryan, just that little piece right there, to replace that with divine and mortal, that one is in control of the other in his life. He has both sides to him, but one is in control of the other. That makes this much more clear.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:43:35 I want to show in just a second how if we move along what he says next, I think it underscores that. But before we do that, Elder Holland talked about this in his wonderful book, Christ and the New Covenant. He says, "Besides being both the spiritual

and physical son of God, and in addition to acting with divine investiture of authority” another way, Hank, that he is the Father, “Jesus claimed a major portion of this divine fatherly power through the fundamental gospel principle of obedience. Christ's final triumph and ultimate assumption of Godly powers came not because he had a divine parent, not because he was given authority from the beginning, but ultimately because he was perfectly obedient. The flesh, the mortal side, submitting to His divine purpose.”

00:44:22 I think this is so important because for each of us who are involved in this, us in this room, the broader audience, we have the exact same invitation. Let the flesh, the mortal side, become subject to the spirit, the divine side, or again, to make a connection to King Benjamin, the natural man is an enemy to God and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be forever and ever. We have to put off the natural man, and become a saint through the atonement. All of us are asked to do the same thing. Mosiah 15 continues, if you look at verse six, "And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said." Now, one of our colleagues, Joe Spencer, pointed this out to me, and I love this thought. He's echoing Isaiah 53 or Mosiah 14 where it says, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all."

00:45:24 Verse seven, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearer is dumb." So, he opened not his mouth. Joe was just pointing out that Abinadi here in chapter 15 now, he has two different lamb metaphors that he could use. One is a lamb to the slaughter, and the other is a sheep before the shearer is dumb. If we were to guess in context of the work of the atonement and such, the assumption would be we would go a lamb to the slaughter, but that's not what Abinadi does. In chapter 15:6, After working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led even as Isaiah said not a lamb to the slaughter, a sheep before the shearer is dumb. So, he opened not his mouth.

00:46:15 The point that Joe is making, and that I really appreciate here, is there's obviously a very big difference between a lamb to the slaughter and a sheep to the shearer. One of them doesn't come back, but a sheep to the shearer, it is this submission. It is as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth, the will of the flesh becoming subject to the will of the spirit, or as it would say in verse seven, "Even so he shall be led, crucified and slain, the flesh becoming subject unto death, the

will of the son being swallowed up in the will of the Father." Again, as I was mentioning earlier, we are all asked to do this same thing. In chapter 16 of Mosiah, Abinadi starts to get at that.

00:47:02 In chapter 16:3, "For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them, yea, even that old serpent did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall, which did cause all mankind to become carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil. Thus, all mankind were lost, and behold they would've been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state, but remember he that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin" who doesn't put off the natural man, whose flesh doesn't become subject to the spirit... Well, here are the consequences for that.

00:47:43 So, the invitation for all of us is, "I am going to submit my mortal, fleshy, fallen state to the will of the Father and the divine side within me, and thus submit to Him." Put off the natural man, and become a saint through the atonement of Christ. As I do that, I learn what President Nelson recently reiterated, that God can make a lot more out of our lives than we can, and we turn our lives over to him, and he helps us become the best version of ourselves that we can become.

Hank Smith: 00:48:18 That persists in his own carnal nature. Who is he speaking to? He's speaking to this group of people. He says, "Now, remember, anyone who continues this carnal nature, this is where they end up." You can see Alma going, "Oh wow."

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:48:36 Yeah, I don't want that.

Hank Smith: 00:48:38 Yeah, he's caught me.

John Bytheway: 00:48:40 I don't think this is about all of us who make mistakes over and over again. Like in your previous story, it's you persist in your carnal nature, and then, another phrase, you go on in the way of sin, and then you rebel. Remember, was it Elder Richard G. Scott that the Lord sees weakness differently than he does rebellion? I like that those three words are together. You persist. You go on and you rebel. This is different than those of us who try and mess up a lot, don't you think?

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:49:07 Yeah, absolutely. One final application from this idea of submission is do you remember the famous Elder Maxwell quote, "The submission of one's will is really the only thing that

we have to give to God?" There's another less known quote, and it was Elder Maxwell speaking in a regional conference or to regional representatives. Area 70s is what we would call them now. Elder Hafen recorded this in one of his books. He said, "It would change the entire church." So, this is Elder Maxwell, which by the way, anytime an apostle says that, my ears perk up. "It would change the entire church if in every ward, we had just three or four more families who became truly consecrated disciples of Jesus Christ instead of just being active in the church."

00:49:57 Usually, we differentiate between less active and active. He's saying, "The goal isn't just active. The goal is all in. It's consecrated. It's the submission of my will to the will of the Father." As he said, it would change the entire church if we had just a few more of those truly consecrated disciples of Christ in each of our wards.

John Bytheway: 00:50:19 That's cool.

Hank Smith: 00:50:19 What a great thought. It makes me want to be one of those people. I probably won't, but I will try. I will try.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:50:27 I would argue. I think you are among those, Hank.

Hank Smith: 00:50:30 Oh, I hope so. As a reader, I read Isaiah 53. I see Christ here, and I see Abinadi walking me through. He's doing something very similar to what Jacob and Nephi would do. They would quote and then explain. As I walk away from Abinadi's beautiful explanation of the Atonement as found in Isaiah 53, how should I see the Savior differently because of Isaiah 53 and then Abinadi's explanation?

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:51:01 If Abinadi were in the room, I would assume he would want us to emphasize just what we were talking about before, that Christ truly did condescend below all things. It's because of that, that we can have confidence in coming to him. Like we were talking about earlier, whether unrepentant of sin, even those things that we keep doing that we wish we didn't do, like I mentioned in this story of my son, we have that hope. Maybe the second part of that is the last part that I want to emphasize in Abinadi's teachings, and that is what he teaches about the resurrection of Christ, the ultimate triumph of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Hank Smith: 00:51:43 100% on board. In my teaching, I often refer to the core doctrines of the church, the ones that we have our highest

confidence in. They're not hard to find. They're not stuck in some quote, in some talk from back in the 1800s. Joseph Smith said this, and it's been taught from Joseph Smith until today, "The atonement of the only-begotten son of God in the flesh is the greatest expression of divine love this world has ever been given. The atonement of Jesus Christ, its importance in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints cannot be overstated." There's some things in the gospel we could probably over teach. We could probably do too much, but this one cannot be talked about enough.

00:52:31 Joseph Smith goes on, "Every other principle, commandment, virtue of the restored gospel", everything we do from temples to prophets to youth programs, to priesthood, "every other principle commandment, virtue of the restored gospel draws its significance from this pivotal event." So, I walk away from these chapters also saying, this is the centerpiece for peace. This is why we do what we do.

John Bytheway: 00:53:00 This is the main thing. To paraphrase Stephen Covey, the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 00:53:08 Yeah. All other things are an appendage to it, the prophet Joseph would say. This really is the most important fundamental doctrine. I think it's significant that Abinadi ends emphasizing the Resurrection, because as President Hinckley has said, without Easter there would be no Christmas. Elder Stevenson in a talk given in 2023 was quoting N.T. Wright. I'll paraphrase. I don't remember what it was exactly, but he said, look, if we take away the birth narrative of Jesus from the New Testament, we lose a couple of chapters. If we take away the resurrection, there is no New Testament. There is no Bible. To quote Paul, "If Christ be not risen from the dead, then is your preaching in vain?" Everything hangs in the balance.

00:53:57 I think it's significant that Abinadi is going to end his discourse focusing on that. In fact, I have to imagine, obviously, we don't know this for sure, but as I was driving in today to do this, I was reminded of this quote from Elder Maxwell. He said, "Some of the best sermons we will ever hear will be thus prompted from the pulpit of memory to an audience of one." I wonder if as Abinadi is teaching the doctrine of the resurrection, I wonder if yes, his audience was the people, and yes, it's the priests, and in a unique way, it's Alma. But I have to wonder, like John mentioned earlier, I wonder if he knows what's coming, and I wonder if it's these teachings that he's about to give about the Resurrection that give him the confidence to stand so boldly in these final moments.

00:54:53 I'm looking at chapter 15. Let's begin in verse 20, "But behold, the bands of death shall be broken, and the son reigneth and hath power over the dead. Therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead, and there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection, yea, even a resurrection of those who have been and who are and who shall be even until the resurrection of Christ, for so shall he be called." So, I wonder if this is sinking deeply in his soul, and now the resurrection of all the prophets and all those who believed on their words, those who as he just finished teaching, those are his seed. When he shall see his seed, it's though it's the prophets and those who are following the prophets. Verse 24, "And these are those who have a part in the first resurrection. These are they who died before Christ came," and he continues there.

00:55:45 But now, jump over to chapter 16, and we'll look at verse six, "Now, if Christ had not come into the world," and I love this from Abinadi, speaking of things to come as though they had already come. You want to talk about faith. For him, it's like, "Oh, I forgot." He hasn't actually come yet literally, but we're going to move forward speaking as though he had. There could have been no redemption. If Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection, but there is a resurrection. Therefore, the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ." That beautiful phrase and that beautiful imagery, I think, encapsulates his message.

00:56:37 Hank, I know you were recently on the Y Religion podcast, and shared some of your experiences which were beautiful and moving, talking about how the sting of death has been swallowed up in Christ in your experiences. I want to share one from a member of my stake where they had a son who had relatively recently come home from his mission. He was going to school up at BYU Idaho. He was home, and he had to leave for work early in the morning. One of those crazy snowstorms that we sometimes get here in Utah comes in, and this young man, as he's driving, ends up getting hit by a truck. It puts him in a coma for several days. First of all, I cannot imagine what that would be like, the fear and concern and the questions and all of those emotions.

00:57:30 In the midst of all of this, while their son is in a coma, and they don't know if he's going to make it or not, his mom sent an email to me and then to some others in the stake. I just want to read part of what she wrote in this email. She wrote this to her daughter who was serving as a missionary at the time. So, this

daughter wasn't even home to help with all of this. Then she forwarded the email to several of us. She said, "There are two types of miracles. We are all praying for a miracle." She said, "The first is the kind where you get what you want." Where miraculously, in this case, their son and brother is miraculously healed. He comes out of this coma, and goes on to live an incredible mortal life, but she said, "The second type is maybe when that miracle doesn't happen, but you feel peace, even though the first kind of miracle doesn't happen. He can give us peace even when things don't turn out the way we want."

00:58:37 She said, "I'm trying to stay positive. I know miracles are possible. I also know that with the number of wonderful people praying for their son, there is plenty of faith for a miracle to happen. And if it's meant to happen, it will, but we also have to be willing to accept the second kind of miracle if that is in God's plan." The second kind of miracle, again, is, "Can I somehow have peace if my son or brother or friend passes away? Can the sting of death truly be swallowed up in the atonement of Christ?" In this case, he ended up passing away a few days later. I was at the funeral, and I heard this same woman share her testimony with positive confidence, grieving obviously, hurting clearly, but the sting of death was swallowed up in Christ because of the second kind of miracle that they found peace and hope in the atonement of Jesus Christ and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

00:59:46 It's a beautiful truth, and I have to wonder if Abinadi is connecting this.

John Bytheway: 00:59:53 It reminds me of the story Elder Bednar tells about, "You have faith to be healed. Do you have the faith not to be healed?" Perhaps both of those can be considered miraculous. I really cannot imagine that kind of a thing happening to a child.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 01:00:13 This young man's dad is my first counselor in our stake presidency. As we were preparing for a stake conference, we were talking about the Saturday evening session, talking about, "We have to make sure it's real, and it's connecting with people, and it's..." We're talking about real challenges. Later that night, he called and he said, "I haven't been able to kick this thought." This was five years ago that this happened, and he said, "I haven't talked about it ever." He said, "I keep getting the impression that I need to share my story." In the Saturday evening session of stake conference, he took 20 minutes, and he talked about talking to his son that morning, getting him off to go to work, and his son was asking his dad for advice, because he was going to go and propose to his girlfriend.

01:01:00 He said, "Yeah, I can't wait to have that conversation. There are so many things that I would love to share with you." Then his son goes off to work, and is killed. So in that talk, he said, "You never know when that moment is." He's talked about never let a day go by that you don't express love and how proud you are of your children, and how much they mean. Anyway, it was an amazing talk.

Hank Smith: 01:01:25 Boy, sounds like it.

John Bytheway: 01:01:27 That's what we call making it real, huh?

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 01:01:29 Yeah. I had to stand up after that, and I just told the stake, I said, "In our preparations, we felt this needed to be real." I just read from Alma 32, and I said, "Oh, then is not this real?" This is the reality of the truths of the gospel.

Hank Smith: 01:01:45 As you were talking about Abinadi there at the end of 16, we all have our own Book of Mormon movie going on in our head. I do picture Abinadi realizing, "This is it. I'm done with my message." Yeah, a lot of this. Verse eight, "There is a resurrection." Verse nine, "He is the light and life of the world, life which is endless," knowing that in whatever the next few hours, days, his mortal life is over. Then again, this is just me being hopeful, but the end of chapter 16:13, 14, and 15, I hope Abinadi is looking straight at Alma knowing he's made a connection. Should you repent of your sins? Remember that in Christ, you are saved. If you teach the law of Moses, almost as if he's giving them his advice, right?

01:02:34 If you're going to teach the law of Moses, teach that it's a shadow of things to come. Teach them, Alma, at the waters of Mormon. Teach them that redemption comes through Christ the Lord." I hope for that. I hope that's the way it worked out.

John Bytheway: 01:02:49 I think those last two verses, Hank, are such a perfect summary of everything he's taught. We had a sister in our ward that got up and gave a talk on two words, "Redemption cometh," out of verse 15 there, that hopeful message. It's coming.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 01:03:08 I just want to end with a couple of thoughts that are captured in stories, again, with small children. Some of my favorite stories are these stories of the wisdom of children. Probably six years ago, we had a little family council. We were talking about some changes that were happening in our family and what that was going to look like. We said, "Do you have any questions?" My then three-year-old raises his hand. Little Talmadge, when he

was three, I mean, every family council, he'd raise his hand high, and then we'd call on him, and he would just say something completely random, had nothing to do with what we were talking about, but he would feel like he contributed to the family council.

01:03:46 On this day, it's a Sunday morning, he raises his hand, and he said, "Guys, Jesus died. He came alive again, and he stayed alive." We were like, "What did you say, bud?" He said, "Jesus died, and he came alive again, but he stayed alive." To this day, I have not heard a more succinct, beautiful summary of the mission and life of Jesus Christ, and the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Looking at Abinadi's teachings, he did die. He condescended below all things. He suffered all of these things, but He came alive again. Again, that's the triumph of the message of the gospel. That's the hope that comes through the resurrection, but equally important is he stayed alive.

01:04:36 Because He stayed alive, He lives now, and because He stayed alive, the work of redemption continues even now. He continues to minister in His own way. He continues to heal and comfort and strengthen and forgive, and all of these things, because he stayed alive again. Elder Holland told this story, and I'll end with this because I feel like it ties in so many different things that we've talked about today. He talked about his neighbor. His neighbor was his bishop. Could you imagine being Elder Holland's bishop, by the way? Not by the way John. Sorry.

Hank Smith: 01:05:12 His bishop, by the way.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 01:05:13 Yeah. Could you imagine being Elder Holland's bishop? He told the story about their neighbor, and they had two children, a little boy named Jimmy and a little four-year-old daughter named Katie. Jimmy was battling leukemia. Again, I can't imagine what that would be like as a parent. They would pray. They would fast. They were priesthood blessings. They would go to the temple. They did everything that they could seeking for that miracle that we were talking about before. The mom went to the temple one day seeking some kind of peace, and she came home absolutely exhausted. It's one of those days where it's exhausted physically and mentally, emotionally, spiritually, the days where you just want to walk in and collapse on your bed, and say, "Nobody talk to me. I can't do anything right now." She has a four-year-old, and four-year-olds don't actually believe in that.

01:06:07 She walks in the door, and little four-year-old Katie starts tugging on her dress. You can imagine the scene, "Mom. Mom.

Hey, mommy. Mom. Mom. Mom." The mom said, "My initial inclination was not now, Katie. I can't do this right now," but she didn't want to regret this moment, and so she paused, and she said, "Yeah, Katie, what is it?" Katie looks up at her mom, and she holds up a piece of paper. You've seen it so many times with little... You get a lot of these little masterpieces from four-year-olds. So, she holds up this piece of paper, and she says, "Mom, do you know what this is?" She says, "No, Katie, what is it?" Katie says, "These are the scriptures," and you can imagine the mom like, "Oh, yes, those are the scriptures. That's wonderful, Katie."

01:06:49 Then this little four-year-old girl looks at her mom who's dealing with all of this. She says, "Mom, do you know what the scriptures say?" Now, if you're a parent, and your four-year-old is about to summarize the entire message of the word of God, you want to know what she's going to say. So, she kneels down at eye level, and she says, "Katie, what do the scriptures say?" Katie looks at her mom, and she says, "They say trust Jesus." Then she drops the paper, and skips away. Mom begins to weep, and she said, "I felt near tangible arms encircle me in that moment." Trust Jesus. The message of Abinadi, the message for Abinadi, the message for us from Abinadi, it's trust. We can trust the Savior.

01:07:40 We can trust that he really is the conquering Messiah, that he conquered death, and because of that, we have hope. I am so thankful for the man Abinadi, but I'm also thankful for the message of Abinadi and for the hope that it's given me. I'll just add my witness that Jesus died, and he came alive again, and he stayed alive. That changes everything for me and for all of us. I share that in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hank Smith: 01:08:15 Amen. Thank you, Ryan. What a great day. We want to thank you, Ryan, for spending your time with us today. We know you're busy, stake president out there in Santaquin.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 01:08:26 Santaquin East Stake.

Hank Smith: 01:08:27 The Santaquin East Stake, we love you. Thank you for letting us borrow your Stake President. Jessica and boys, thank you for letting us borrow your husband for a few hours. What a great day, John.

John Bytheway: 01:08:39 Yeah. To end with the testimony of a three-year-old, incredible, out of the mouths of babes, right? That's awesome.

Hank Smith: 01:08:45 Yeah, that's absolutely beautiful. I was thinking, Ryan, as you finished, is we've been friends for a long time and how much I really like you. I like this guy. Then I thought, "One thing I hope is that our listeners really enjoy our guests," and they do. People tell us all the time, John, right? I love your guests, but I think Ryan would agree with me when I say, yes, the guest is amazing, but it's the book. It's the material we have.

Dr. Ryan Sharp: 01:09:14 Yep. Absolutely.

Hank Smith: 01:09:17 It's this book. You can take a great guest with an infinitely important, beautiful book, and this is what happens. We want to thank Dr. Ryan Sharp for being with us today, so grateful for you and your wisdom and the stories you've shared. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen, and we always remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We're going to talk Waters of Mormon and what happens to Alma on followHIM.

AIN'T NO RIVER WIDE ENOUGH



- Hank Smith: 00:02 Hello everyone, welcome to another followHIM Favorites. John and I are telling a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, today we're in Mosiah 11-17, Abinadi. You've told me you have a story, I want to hear it.
- John Bytheway: 00:16 Yeah, I do. If you remember Hank, they tried to stump Abinadi with an Isaiah question. What does it mean how beautiful upon the mountains of the feet of him that bringeth good tidings and publisheth peace? And I remembered this story about shoes that I just had never forgot. And actually it's kind of fun Hank, because you might remember EFY books back when they used to make a book. Well, we have a new General Authority Seventy named Elder David L. Buckner. He was an EFY counselor with me back in the day, and he wrote-
- Hank Smith: 00:48 I know Dave.
- John Bytheway: 00:49 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 00:50 I should say Elder Buckner.
- John Bytheway: 00:52 Right. We better call him Elder Buckner. But he wrote a chapter in this book and he tells this wonderful story. He said, not long ago, Elder M. Russell Ballard, a member of the Quorum of the 12 Apostles was assigned to preside over and speak at a church conference in La Paz, Bolivia. Members traveled from far off towns and villages to attend. A number of members had to sacrifice much time, effort, and money to get to the meetings. Prior to the meeting, Elder Ballard stood in front of the chapel to greet some of the arriving brethren. And he noticed that many of them looked disheveled and pretty tired, and he noticed that some of them had a discoloration on their shirts. From mid-chest and above, their shirts were white and clean from mid-chest and below, they were stained with a reddish coloring. When they approached to shake Elder Ballard's hand, they informed him that they were so pleased to have arrived in

time to meet him and they spent many hours traveling to the meetings much of the time on foot.

01:53 They were required to forward two rivers along the way where they held their books and their scriptures above their heads, and the waters came up to their chests. And that's why their shirts were stained with that reddish shade. The final two hours were riding in the back of a pickup truck, and then they had to walk. Their shoes were soggy and wet. And as they greeted Elder Ballard, they said, "Elder Ballard, you are one of the Lord's apostles. My brother and I would do whatever is required to be taught by you." And you can just imagine how beautiful those soggy, wet, worn out shoes looked to Elder Ballard. So we want to say hello to our friends, brothers and sisters, who might be listening in La Paz, Bolivia and say, we love you and we sustain you, and we support you. And your feet are beautiful upon the mountains like Isaiah said.

Hank Smith: 03:00 Wow, what an incredible story. I was thinking maybe they had a spaghetti dinner or something, but they had that kind of journey to go see an apostle. That's just beautiful. Beautiful feet.

John Bytheway: 03:13 And they were happy to do it.

Hank Smith: 03:16 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 03:16 They were happy to do it. "We would do whatever is required to be taught by you." They said to Elder Ballard.

Hank Smith: 03:22 Fantastic. John, what a great story. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet? And for someone who doesn't think feet are very beautiful, that was a beautiful story. I love it. We hope you'll join us on our podcast. It's called followHIM, you can get it wherever you get your podcast. And then join us back here next week, we'll do another followHIM favorites.