



EPIISODE 4

GUEST: JOSHUA M. SEARS



“Armed with Righteousness and the Power of God”

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:

How does reading Nephi’s Vision prepare you for the work in the kingdom? Dr. Joshua Sears explores the evolution of the term “Messiah” and emphasizes the role of Jesus Christ and his condescension to gather the family of God.

Part 2:

Dr. Sears continues to explore Nephi’s Dream and the crucial nature of the Abrahamic Covenant in the fortunate Scattering and Gathering of Israel.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:00 Part 1–Dr. Joshua Sears
- 00:47 Nephi wants to see what Lehi saw
- 01:09 Dr. Sears shares the two purposes of the Book of Mormon
- 02:44 Bio of Dr. Joshua Sears
- 07:38 1 Nephi 1 and the term “Messiah”
- 10:09 Kingship and the title Messiah
- 10:58 Messiah as Redeemer
- 12:12 1 Nephi 11 and the “condescension of God”
- 14:13 The Lion and the Lamb
- 15:49 Jehovah and the Messiah in 1 Nephi 11:18
- 19:00 Jesus as the literal Son of God
- 22:19 Fulfilling the promises of the Title Page
- 24:13 1 Nephi 8:30
- 26:32 Similarities for Lehi and Nephi
- 28:48 Heseu and covenantal relationships
- 33:42 So exclusive, everyone can be a part
- 35:43 Broken relationships with God
- 38:03 “Being cast off”
- 41:33 Psalm 89
- 47:03 We are free to choose to be in covenant with God
- 51:53 1 Nephi 11:7 and 1 Nephi 12
- 56:28 1 Nephi 10:12 and a remnant
- 59:20 The term gentile
- 1:00:42 The Great and Abominable Church
- 1:04:25 That which destroys souls
- 1:07:00 A Jewish record
- 1:09:52 End of Part 1–Dr. Joshua Sears

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II–Dr. Joshua Sears
- 00:07 The New and Everlasting Covenant
- 02:25 Doctrinal misunderstanding informs biblical interpretation
- 04:49 Blindness to the covenants
- 06:47 Losing covenant consciousness
- 10:21 Covenants fulfilled in the Last Days
- 13:10 Jesus and the vision
- 16:38 The Book of Mormon reorients to the Abrahamic Covenant
- 20:53 The Abrahamic Covenant was not totally fulfilled in the Meridian of Time

- 22:27 Salvation as a people
- 25:26 The Restoration is to restore people to a covenantal relationship with God
- 26:43 1 Nephi 13:38
- 28:18 The Book of Mormon restores everyone to the covenant
- 30:50 1 Nephi 15 Nephi shares what he has learned
- 32:26 The fluidity of the concept of gentiles
- 34:48 Focus on covenants instead of Columbus
- 36:02 Lamanties as a type of those who need to return to the Covenant Path
- 39:51 The Lord's work
- 43:46 The power of covenants to those who have strayed
- 46:58 The Book of Mormon is full of hope
- 48:48 Lazarus and wayward souls
- 53:15 Spiritual Alzheimer's
- 54:13 Dr. Sears shares his testimony of Jesus and the Book of Mormon
- 59:06 End of Part II– Dr. Joshua Sears

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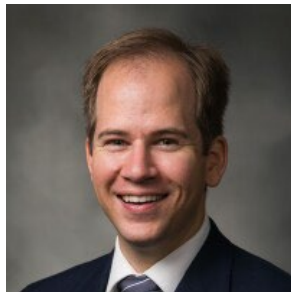
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Biographical Information:



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

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Everyone Can Be
a Part of It!**

GUEST: JOSHUA M. SEARS



Hank Smith:	00:00:04	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of FollowHIM. We are excited to continue our study of the Book of Mormon. My name's Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my co-host who I will describe as joyous to the soul, John Bytheway. Welcome, John. Do you feel like you're joyous to the soul? I feel like you are.
John Bytheway:	00:00:22	I have moments like that. I have other moments, but sometimes I have those moments. Where I'm not so joyous to the soul. Yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:00:27	I'll ask your children what they think of that.
John Bytheway:	00:00:30	Yeah, right.
Hank Smith:	00:00:32	John, we're continuing our discussion in First Nephi. We were with Dr. Strathearn last week, showed us some incredible things with Lehi's Dream and the connection with First Nephi 10. What are you looking forward to today? Have you been thinking about what we've learned?
John Bytheway:	00:00:47	What I love is that Nephi wants to see what his father saw and instead of the angel repeating the same thing, he gives him a triple dose. He brings in another television and shows him things on two screens.
Hank Smith:	00:00:58	Yeah, we get an extended version. We get Lehi's Dream, but we get to see things we didn't see the first time around.
John Bytheway:	00:01:04	We see the life of Christ interspersed with the dream and it's really cool how they do it.
Hank Smith:	00:01:09	Yeah, I've told my students before, the tree stands up, has arms and legs and starts healing people. John, we are joined by a good friend of both of ours, an incredible Bible scholar. His name is Dr. Josh Sears. Josh, what are we looking forward to today as we look at Nephi's experience?

Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:01:27	I'm excited because on the title page of the Book of Mormon that Moroni wrote to introduce the whole thing, Moroni explains that there's two purposes for the Book of Mormon and I think in Nephi's vision, you see both of those purposes really playing out. Number one is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers and that they may know the covenants of the Lord that they are not cast off forever. Number two, to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile, that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God manifesting himself unto all nations. The Book of Mormon as a whole does this, but Nephi's vision sure going to really zero in on those two things. We're going to have fun seeing how the Book of Mormon fulfills what it's set out to do.
Hank Smith:	00:02:10	Fantastic. Josh, I'm looking forward to this because here's a book I've read many times and yet, every time I go through, I see something new, especially when I have someone who's also read it many times. They can show me things that I've never seen before. This year, going through the Book of Mormon, I just am getting more and more excited for each lesson because the book seems to change with me as I grow older. The book seems to adapt to my situation. John, Josh is not new to our podcast. I'm sure many of our listeners remember his awesome episodes in the past, but let's do a quick introduction.
John Bytheway:	00:02:45	Yes. We're so happy to have Dr. Joshua Sears back. He's an assistant professor of ancient scripture at BYU. He received a PhD in the Hebrew Bible from the University of Texas at Austin. His wife, Alice, is from Hong Kong and plays in the bells at Temple Square. They live in Lindon with their five children. I was very excited to have Joshua back again because I remember what we did before and I'm thinking, okay, I've got my pencil sharpened. I'm ready for action.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:03:12	Well, it's great to be back. Thanks.
Hank Smith:	00:03:14	Josh, we love having you and John, when I think of Josh, I just think someone that brilliant should not be that humble. It's not fair. It shouldn't work that way because I'm not that brilliant and I'm not that humble and that just goes to ... I'm going the wrong direction in both of those. Yeah, it's going to be exciting to have Josh with us. I have to read, John, from his Old Testament lessons. We put together a compilation. It's called Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. You can get it absolutely free on our website and these two lessons, John, Josh was with us for our opening lesson in Genesis. It was a life changer for me. Josh showed us things about the creation I had never seen before and then he came back and he did a section

of scripture that I'm sure many of our listeners, including me and you, John, hadn't really taken time to read through, 2 Kings 17. That doesn't usually ring wow to me, but Josh took it and made it unbelievable.

00:04:15 I would encourage any of our listeners who are looking to have an incredible experience, go back and find these two episodes either on YouTube or just use your app and go back and listen to these. I want to read to you two thoughts out of the many that are in this book from Josh's episode on 2 Kings. Hezekiah is a reminder that if you've got a human leader, as good as they might be, they're going to eventually disappoint you. If you look hard enough or wait long enough, whether it is Joseph Smith or your bishop or somebody, they will disappoint you. They're not perfect, but the Savior, of course, is going to do everything that they can do, but perfectly, and we can trust him not to stumble and let us down. Then, as Josh was talking about Hezekiah and the struggle he was going through, the pressures he was under, and I really felt that with Josh. Here's what Josh said.

00:05:09 He said, "God has a long game. He is not making promises to these people and then everything is going to be ruined. In fact, even though they are wicked and have some major setbacks and all sorts of destruction and calamity, they can't ultimately thwart God's plans. He is always going to find a way to use Israel to accomplish his purposes, no matter how bad they blow it along the way. The theological takeaway here is that God is still in charge. He is moving the chessboard in ways that we can't comprehend and with the sight that goes beyond what we can see and he is going to make everything turn out the way it is supposed to be." Again, John, I know I'm gushing here a little bit, but if you want to have an incredible experience, go look up these two episodes in the Old Testament. They were really life changers.

John Bytheway: 00:05:55 Absolutely. That's another reason I was just looking forward to this. After our first few episodes in the Book of Mormon, Hank, I thought, "I think I know this book," and now I'm like, "Oh, okay. I got a lot to learn."

Hank Smith: 00:06:07 Yeah, I've only read this book for what, 35 years, and people are showing me things I've never seen before. We can't feel embarrassed, John. We just have to be good students. Here's what the Come, Follow Me manual says. It says, "When God has a monumental work for his prophets to do, he often gives that prophet a monumental vision. Moses, John, Lehi, Joseph Smith all had visions like that, visions that expanded their minds and helped them see just how grand and awe-inspiring God's work

really is." Nephi also had one of these life changing visions. Josh, with that, how are we going to jump into these chapters?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:06:42 There's a lot in these visions. We're going to have to take this step by step. In chapter 11 as the vision begins, this is where Nephi is learning about Jesus Christ and where we see most this purpose from the Book of Mormon is to convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God manifesting himself to all nations. What we want to see in this vision is how Nephi learns, what does it mean that he's the Christ? What does it mean he's the Eternal God and how does he manifest himself? Of course, the vision doesn't just come out of nowhere. It's not just giving Nephi a random history lesson. It follows everything that's been happening in the first 10 chapters of the Book of Mormon, the questions that Nephi has been having, the conversations in the family, the struggles that they're having, so to better appreciate what he's learning about Jesus, I want to really quickly look at a few verses from chapters one to 10. We can follow this thread of what has Nephi been learning about the Messiah already to prepare him for the vision?

Hank Smith: 00:07:37 Wonderful. Let's do it.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:07:38 First Nephi, chapter one has Lehi, and it's the first time we get this term, Messiah. Chapter one, verse 19 says that Lehi testified the things which he read in the book manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah and also the redemption of the world. The thing I want to point out here that might sound a little strange to us at first is he doesn't say, "The Messiah." He says, "A Messiah." The reason for that, you got to get back into their ancient Israelite, Old Testament kind of setting. They're in Old Testament Jerusalem right now. I think the reason Lehi is very deliberately saying, "A Messiah," is because at this point in history, there's no concept of one single Messiah. There's lots of Messiahs. We learned this back in the Old Testament here, that Messiah comes from a Hebrew word mashiach and it means, anointed one, literally someone who's had oil poured on their head to anoint them for some special task or mission and giving them divine power and authority.

00:08:39 In Old Testament times, there was lots of people that this happened to. Priests are anointed, they are Messiahs. The kings of Israel are referred to as Messiahs because they are anointed, they're set apart to be God's leaders for the people. You don't usually see this in translation, but, for example, in the story of where David and Saul are chasing each other around and David has the opportunity to kill Saul, but he doesn't do it, he says, "I don't want to lift up my hand," and the King James version says,

"The Lord's anointed," but the Hebrew there is the Lord's Messiah. He's saying the God commissioned this guy, so God's got to have to take him out. I don't want to do that. There's lots of Messiahs there, and most often when we see references to Messiah in the Old Testament, it's to the King of Judah or Israel there. They're the ones.

00:09:25 If you are in Nephi's Jerusalem and stop someone on the street and said, "Excuse me, sir, can you direct me where I might find the Messiah," they'd probably point up to the palace and say, "He's up there." Lehi is recognizing that there's more than one Messiah, even while he's around right there. That's why he's got to say, "A Messiah." He's talking about a certain person, but he's using a title that they're familiar with from elsewhere. Now, what happens in the rest of Old Testament and New Testament history is Babylon destroys the kingdom of Judah. They lose the kingship. There's no longer a king ruling over them from the line of David. You don't have that kind of a Messiah anymore and they start to talk about, wow, it'd be great if a descendant of David one day returns, takes the throne and rules over Israel again.

00:10:09 Over time, they start referring to this future king as not just a Messiah but the Messiah. The Messiah of Messiahs, the ultimate Messiah who's going to come, take the throne and just set everything right. By the time you get to Jesus showing up in the New Testament, they do have this idea of the Messiah as a specific single individual that they're looking forward to coming. What we can see in the Book of Mormon is they go through that same kind of development, but a lot faster. Here in one Nephi chapter one, Lehi starts a Messiah, and then now let's jump to chapter 10, where Lehi's going to talk about him again. Chapter 10 verse four. He says, "600 years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews even a Messiah," or in other words, a savior of the world we're still saying a Messiah.

00:10:59 Then, in verse five, he refers to this Messiah, meaning of all the Messiahs out there, I'm now talking about this one who's going to come in 600 years and then in verse seven he talks about the Messiah and from then on, the rest of the Book of Mormon, it's just the Messiah. Within a few verses, Lehi transitions from a Messiah to the Messiah because he's established now we're talking about this guy, this human king from the line of David who's going to come and do these amazing things. Then, just by way of review, he talks about how this Messiah is going to be a redeemer, how he's going to get baptized and he's going to take away the sin of the world. He has this overview of what this

figure is going to do. Nephi has this basic understanding before he moves on into the vision.

- Hank Smith: 00:11:48 Wow, that's fantastic. There was multiple Messiahs because it means anointed, like a king. A king was anointed, so that could be a Messiah, but then over time, they start to recognize that there's going to be the Messiah.
- John Bytheway: 00:12:04 Reminds me of Isaiah a little bit king of kings and Lord of Lords. There's Messiahs, but this is the Messiah of the Messiahs.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:12:12 Yeah. Chapter 11 opens "For it came to pass after I desired to know the things that my father had seen and believing that the Lord was able to make them known unto me. As I sat pondering in my heart, I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea into an exceedingly high mountain and thus begins this vision." I want to jump ahead a little bit and let's look at where Nephi starts learning about Jesus Christ here. Verse 13, "It came to pass that I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem and also other cities and I beheld the city of Nazareth and in the city of Nazareth, I beheld a virgin and she was exceedingly fair and white, and it came to pass that I saw the heavens open and an angel came down and stood before me and he said unto me, "Nephi, what beholdest thou?" I said unto him, "A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins." He said unto me, "Knowest thou the condescension of God." That's the really interesting question that's going to kick off Nephi's important lesson here. We know that the word condescension here means to go from a higher kind of place down to a lower kind of place, and this is going to be Nephi's lesson about how Jesus is going to go from ruling up in heaven to coming down and becoming a human being here on earth. The angel asked the question, "Nephi, do you understand this?" and Nephi's response in verse 17 is, "I know that he loveth his children. Nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things," and first, I love his response there that when we face things that we don't understand or things that don't make sense, it's okay to acknowledge that, but we can acknowledge and in fact, lead with what we do know.
- 00:13:55 What Nephi does say he knows is that God loves his children. That's helped me a lot when there's things I can't make sense of, that don't seem to fit with the way things are supposed to work. I'll go back to that to say, "I know that Heavenly Father loves us as his children and therefore, somehow, this is going to make sense even if I don't get it right now."
- Hank Smith: 00:14:14 Josh, we had a lesson a couple of weeks ago with Dr. Nick Frederick in the Book of Revelation and in chapter five of

Revelation, John looks for a lion. Someone tells him, "The lion is going to open the book," and he's looking for a lion, but when he turns and looks, he sees a lamb. Dr. Frederick brought us to this verse, "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" this wonderful idea that the Savior is going to go from this to this and this dramatic condescension is bigger than when I hear the angel say, "Knowest thou the condescension of God," I almost hear him say, "Do you have any idea who that is? Are you wrapping your mind around what he gave up, what he was to what he became?"

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:14:59 Yeah, and let's explore this a little bit more. The angel says, "Do you know the condescension of God?" Nephi's not sure about that. When we have to ask, "What does the angel mean by God," how is Nephi interpreting that term? We got to remember again, Nephi is an ancient Israelite living smack dab in the middle of the times of the Old Testament. For him, God is Jehovah, the God of Israel, the one who covenanted with Moses on Mount Sinai, the one that was speaking through the prophet Isaiah, the one that led them through the Exodus. That's Jehovah, the God of Israel. When Nephi hears God, he's going to be thinking Jehovah. We've got to keep in mind that in Old Testament times, most of the Israelites aren't thinking of the Godhead in the way that we do today in a post New Testament world. They're not thinking of Heavenly Father and his son, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost. They just refer to Jehovah.
- 00:15:52 When the angel says, "Do you know the condescension of God," Nephi's thinking Jehovah, and Nephi says, "No. What are you talking about?" In verse 18, the angel says, "Behold the virgin whom thou sees is the mother of the Son of God after the manner of the flesh," and to really appreciate what Nephi is trying to grasp here, I'm going to point out that the way Joseph Smith originally translated this verse and the way it was published in the first edition of the Book of Mormon in 1830 is a little different from the way it reads in our Book of Mormon today. The reason is that there's a few verses here in this chapter where in the 1837 edition, the second edition, Joseph Smith went through and changed the wording slightly. I think the reason Joseph did that is because he was trying to avoid confusion for us as modern readers because the way ancient Israelites talked about God uses different vocabulary than the way modern Christians talk about God.
- 00:16:48 I suspect Joseph was concerned that we would misunderstand the roles of the God here if we're using Nephi's ancient Israelite vocabulary, so he exercised his prophetic prerogative to adjust the text to make sure there's no misunderstanding on our part.

It can be helpful to know what it originally said because that can help us appreciate from Nephi's point of view what it was that he was learning in his context. There's not like one of the versions is wrong and one is right. I think the original one makes sense of Nephi's point of view, and what Joseph Smith changed it to is appropriate for helping us understand from our point of view.

00:17:22 In verse 18, what Joseph changed was he added the three words, "The son of,". Originally, what the angel said to Nephi was, "The virgin whom thou sees is the mother of God after the manner of the flesh." There's similar changes in verse 21. The angel says, "Behold the lamb of God," and today, it says, "The son of the Eternal Father." Originally, it just says, "Even the Eternal father." It's worth noting that in the Old Testament times, father was a title for Jehovah, like in Isaiah 63:16 or 64, verse eight. Also, in verse 32,

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:18:00 The angel says that the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world. Originally that's just the everlasting God was judged of the world. That's also everlasting God is a title for Jehovah in the Old Testament like in Genesis 21:33 or Isaiah 40:28. And then the final thing that Joseph changed was in chapter 13:40 which says that the Lamb of God is, and today it says the Son of the Eternal Father, but originally it read the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father. Throughout this, the angels using Old Testament titles for Jehovah that Nephi would've been familiar with. And what he's trying to communicate is this. He says, "Do you know about the condescension of Jehovah?" And Nephi says, "No. What are we talking about?" And then the angel says, "The virgin whom thou seest is the mother of Jehovah after the manner of the flesh." In other words, she is Jehovah's human mother. And I think at this point Nephi's brain is just about exploding.

Hank Smith: 00:19:00 Josh, what I'm gathering here, Nephi would not at this time in Israelite history have an idea that God has a Son that's going to come, that the Messiah would be the Son of God.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:13 Yeah, that's not a concept. And I think that's something important that this vision is showing right here. Nephi's learning this information for the first time. That means that he didn't pick this up from his culture, his version of Sunday school. He never picked up this idea that Jehovah is going to condescend and become a human or anything like that. It also suggests he didn't learn this from his own dad, a prophet. Lehi didn't tell him this, and I don't know. I've wondered, did Lehi not understand this himself and he learns it from his own son after

the vision, or did Lehi know this but it seemed so mind-blowing that he kind of kept it close and private, didn't feel like he could share this with his sons yet until Nephi got the revelation for himself and then they speak about this more openly. I don't know, but we don't see Lehi talking like this before the vision. We do see him after the visions.

00:20:02 I don't know which of those scenarios is correct, but at least we can tell for Nephi, he seems to be getting his mind blown as he learns about this for the first time. He learns, "Okay, Jehovah is going to condescend and become a human being. He's got a human mother. He's going to live a human life." It's interesting. He says, "I want to know what the tree means." Then he sees the virgin, he learns about the condescension of God. And then in verse 20, he sees the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. Verse 21, the angel says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, yea, even", in the original, "the Eternal Father." And then he says, "Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?" which was Nephi's original question. And in verse 22, Nephi says, yep, I do now. "It's the love of God."

00:20:48 And what's interesting to me is Nephi already knew about Jehovah. He already knew that God loves his children. It's one of the things he says he does know. But somehow understanding that Jehovah's going to become human now is helping him appreciate the love of God in a way he never has before. "The love of God," he says, "which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men, wherefore it is the most desirable above all things." Which is kind of an echo of what the fruit was like back in the tree, right? But the idea that God is not just helping you from afar but is coming down to earth to live like us and experience what we experience, to walk among us, to be hungry, to be thirsty. I think Nephi is recognizing that is the biggest manifestation of love I could think of from my God, to come be here with me.

Hank Smith: 00:21:40 So this idea that we're used to of Jesus coming to earth, he's not so used to.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:21:46 Yeah. And we should notice now that as the angel keeps talking, he's using phrases like Lamb of God, which Nephi had already heard before back in chapter 10 when Lehi was talking about the Messiah. Nephi is just having an incredible lesson from revelation, and this is probably forcing him to rethink a lot of how he thinks about God and the plan of salvation and everything. This is just changing his fundamentals in an amazing new way that opens him up to all these new possibilities.

Hank Smith:	00:22:13	Yeah, that's fantastic, seeing this happen for the first time, awe-inspiring to Nephi.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:22:19	So we should pause and note here that as Nephi has been learning about this, this is again where we see the title page of the Book of Mormon fulfilling its promise to us. The title page says that the Book of Mormon is supposed to convince Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ. Christ is your Greek term for Anointed One, so it's the equivalent of Messiah. Jesus is the Messiah. He's that human king from the line of David who's going to come and be born and do all those things. And it says, "Jesus is also the Eternal God," which again is a title for Jehovah, like in Deuteronomy 33:27 you see that. One way you can reinterpret the title page here saying Jesus is the Christ, he's the Messiah, and also he is the eternal God. He is Jehovah. He's both of them in one. He's both figures.
	00:23:06	The Book of Mormon is kind of making this case that Jehovah, the God of Israel, and Jesus the human Messiah are the same persons. You see that ground laid for that here in Nephi's vision, and they're going to continue to discuss this for the rest of the Book of Mormon.
	00:23:21	Then the rest of chapter 11 of 1st Nephi, just Nephi sees kind of a summary of his mortal ministry. It says that he goes forth among the children of men, that he's baptized. This is elaborating on what Lehi had already told Nephi about him getting baptized. That he ministers to the people, that he heals them, that he's eventually taken and judged of the world, and that he's lifted up on the cross and slain for the sins of the world. So we get this kind of panoramic overview of Jesus's life there. It doesn't conclude with his resurrection, which is really interesting. We'll get the resurrected Jesus in the next chapter when he visits the Nephites. Jesus's story here is kind of framed as part of a larger story. It's not like he dies on the cross and we've reached the climax and we're done now. This is the setup for the longer covenant story of how God's going to redeem his covenant people. And of course the Messiah is central to making that happen.
Hank Smith:	00:24:13	Excellent. So chapter 11 breaks new ground for Nephi. That's a fun way to look at it. I wanted to take a look at a connection with Lehi's dream and see what you both think about it. Right at the end of 1st Nephi 8:30, there's this group of people who are making their way towards the tree, and when they get to the tree, they fall down. And I remember being taught as a kid, or maybe I just thought this, that living the gospel is so hard. It's so difficult that when you get to the end, you're just exhausted.

You have endured to the end. Maybe there's something from that lesson there, but what do you think of these people falling down and partake of the fruit of the tree?

- 00:24:56 And then chapter 11, as Nephi is seeing the life of Christ in verse 24, he says, "I saw the Son of God going forth among the children of men, and I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him." Josh, John, is there a connection there that the tree that Lehi saw is the Lord and there's people get to him and they truly know who he is when they get to the tree or they get to the Messiah and they fall down. Not because they're exhausted from living the gospel, but they know who that is. What do you think?
- John Bytheway: 00:25:34 I've always loved the idea that that was worship, that Christ is the tree and they fell down at the tree. That was God so loved the world He gave his Son and the love of God was the fruit. So I think both of those work, but I don't necessarily think the gospel is so exhausting.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:52 So hard to live.
- John Bytheway: 00:25:54 Yeah, it should bring us some joy and some sweet is the work type of feelings as well.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:59 Right. Am I in safe ground to say the tree is the Lord and the fruit is the love of God, which Josh connected in verse 22 there. When Nephi sees the Lord he says, "It's the love of God that is most desirous to the soul" and that's the connection to the fruit.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:26:19 And that love is manifested most obviously by Jehovah coming down to earth as Jesus Christ and sacrificing his life. You can't get a better representation of the love of God than that act right there.
- Hank Smith: 00:26:32 Is it possible then that Nephi and Lehi saw similar things, but describe it differently? Maybe Lehi sees the life of the Lord and describes him as a tree and Nephi sees the life of the Lord and gives us in more literal terms? As you go through Nephi's vision, you can start to see elements of the mists of darkness, the great and spacious building, the great and abominable church. Do you feel like, Josh, they saw similar things or should I take this as no, these are two totally different visions?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:27:02 Well, it seems pretty clear that the imagery from the dream is embedded all over Nephi's vision. He started off saying, "I want

to see the things my father saw," but it does seem like it's not exactly the same experience and it's framed differently and pointing out different things. I mean, Nephi even makes that comment at one point. Well, the water's dirty and our father didn't notice that.

- Hank Smith: 00:27:21 He didn't mention, yeah, he didn't see that.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:27:22 He's having a kind of different experience, I think, and pulling new things out of it.
- John Bytheway: 00:27:26 Yeah, I think of it as like Lehi saw it on this big screen TV and then Nephi wants to see it and they bring in another big screen TV. I don't think angels use big screen TVs, but 1st Nephi 11:4, "Believest thou thy father saw the tree?" He says, "Yea, I believe all the words of my father." And then in verse 6, "Yea, Nephi, thou believest in the Son of the most high God." And it's like, "Oh, so the tree is... Oh, okay." So I feel like he sees the vision and interspersed with events in the life of Christ he sees some of the things that Lehi's dream, his vision symbolizes and is going back and forth like this. That's kind of the way I've thought of it. And like you said, Josh, at one point, "Yeah, my father's mind was so caught up in other things he didn't notice this."
- 00:28:12 I love the idea that if you ask, God might give you even more than you expected. What did Joseph Smith want to know? Well, which church should I join? What did he get? Why are we all sitting here today? Well, a teenage boy said a prayer, which is amazing. You might get more than you expect.
- Hank Smith: 00:28:32 Yeah, you ask the Lord for a knife and he gives you the whole house that goes with it. I love this idea that perhaps Nephi saw the tree and then it transformed maybe in front of him, into the Lord, and then he sees the life of Christ, which maybe started as seeing the tree that...
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:28:48 We're going to move on to chapter 12, but before we can fully appreciate why chapter 12 was so significant to Nephi, this is another case where I think we got to go back to the first ten chapters, see what's going on in their family, what questions are they having, what are the issues, so that we can appreciate why is Nephi learning what he's learning in chapter 12. I'd like to go back to chapter 8 for a moment here in Lehi's dream. And of course, Laman and Lemuel are featured prominently in this dream. Dr. Strathearn talked about this in the last episode. That even though we can read the dream as being about broader groups of people, Lehi seems to be really focused on the

implications of this in his own family. In 1st Nephi 8:36, Nephi summarizes, " It came to pass after my father had spoken all the words of his dream or vision, which were many, he said unto us, because of these things which he saw in a vision, he exceedingly feared for Laman and Lemuel. Yea, he feared lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord."

00:29:49 Verse 37. "And he did exhort them with all the feeling of a tender parent that they would hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them and not cast them off." We've got this issue here. We've got a crisis in the family. Laman and Lemuel are at risk of being cast off from the presence of the Lord and that's something that they're all struggling with. Nephi is struggling with this. And to really appreciate the full significance of the dynamic here and what's going on, I think we need to recognize that the terms being used here, presence of the Lord and cast off, are Old Testament covenant language.

00:30:24 We got to go back a little bit again to Old Testament and kind of see a little bit of development of these ideas here so we can kind of appreciate why these ancient Israelites in this family are using these terms and what they mean by them. Let's take a couple minutes and do quick Covenant 101 again. Just to sum up. Heavenly Father wants to have an intimate, binding, exalting, relationship with all of his children. That's why he offers us the new and everlasting covenant so that we can come to him in that close relationship where we can grow and develop and become like Him in the bonds of that covenant relationship that we have.

00:31:03 And President Nelson's Liahona article, The Everlasting Covenant, which is from October 2022, he explains that we enter the new and everlasting covenant with baptism. And then he says, "When you and I also enter that path, we have a new way of life. We thereby create a relationship with God that allows him to bless and change us. The covenant path leads us back to him. If we let God prevail in our lives, that covenant will lead us closer and closer to him. All covenants are intended to be binding. They create a relationship with everlasting ties." To illustrate how everlasting and binding these ties are, President Nelson talks about this Hebrew term that I've mentioned on the podcast before, hesed. President Nelson says that in English we don't have a good word for the kind of love and loyalty and mercy that's experienced within a covenant relationship, but the Israelites had a word for this and it's hesed, H-E-S-E-D.

	00:32:07	President Nelson says, "All those who have made a covenant with God have access to a special kind of love and mercy. In the Hebrew language that covenantal love is called hesed." And then he says, "In English, it's translated a whole bunch of different ways like loving kindness or mercy or love or goodness." And he says, "Hesed is a unique term describing a covenant relationship in which both parties are bound to be loyal and faithful to each other. Because God has hesed for those who have covenanted with him, he will love them. He will continue to work with them and offer them opportunities to change. He will forgive them when they repent and should they stray, he will help them find their way back to him."
	00:32:48	Once you and I have made a covenant with God," President Nelson continues, "our relationship with him becomes much closer than before our covenant. Now we are bound together. Because of our covenant with God, He will never tire in his efforts to help us and we will never exhaust His merciful patience with us. Each of us has a special place in God's heart. He has high hopes for us." That's the end of my quote from President Nelson. So we've got this idea in the Old Testament that God wants to have a covenant relationship with us, both as individuals and as part of this covenant people, Israel, that was formed when he covenanted with Abraham and Sarah. We covenant with God individually and we're also part of this covenant family or covenant people, Israel, whose job it is to take the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant out to all the nations of the earth. From Genesis, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."
Hank Smith:	00:33:42	Josh, I think that's a very important point. Oftentimes we talk about Israel as if they're chosen and they're better, that God has a people and that he doesn't love the rest of the world. And what you said there is crucial. No, these are the chosen people to take my love to everyone else in the world.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:34:02	And then the idea is that once Gentiles join the covenant, that they're numbered with or adopted into the house of Israel. This is an exclusive group that God wants every single person to be a part of. Everyone's invited to partake of this covenant relationship with God.
Hank Smith:	00:34:17	It's so exclusive. Everyone can be a part of it.
John Bytheway:	00:34:20	We just this past week talked about the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12 and it appears in a few places, but the Abraham, I think, version says to bear the ministry like you're talking about. Your job is to take this to the world. And Elder Bednar even said

once that that's the reason the missionary gets his patriarchal blessing first so that they have that reminder they are house of Israel. So I like to say it's kind of like being a chosen person is not to sit on a throne and be admired. It's more like being chosen to mow the lawn. It's more like God has a work for you to do. It's a blessing, but it's a burden too and a responsibility. So I like that you said that.

- Hank Smith: 00:34:57 Genesis 12 says, "In thee," to Abraham, "shall all the families of the earth be blessed." That's Genesis 12:3. Josh, thanks for pointing that out, that this group called Israel is not meant to be God's chosen, exclusive, hey, we're better than you. It's you're chosen to spread the message and invite everyone into this group.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:35:22 Yeah. He says there in the first three verses of Genesis 12, "I will bless thee, Israel". You guys get the blessings of the covenant and through you you're going to bless everybody else. This is his plan and his program to get the opportunity to join the everlasting covenant out to all his kids. He wants to have that close relationship with everyone.
- Hank Smith: 00:35:40 And it seems it would work, but the only problem is Israel.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:35:43 Yeah. Unfortunately, like all relationships, things don't always go perfectly. So in Old Testament language, this covenant language, you can kind of divide up your state into two conceptual categories, which they call being in the presence of the Lord or you're separated from the presence of the Lord.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:36:00 They kind of divide it into those two. Being in the presence of the Lord means that you're close to him, the relationship is working, you're receiving the blessings of being in the covenant, you have his Spirit to be with you. Not being in the presence of the Lord is the opposite of that, where the relationship is experiencing friction or it's broken. You're not experiencing the blessings of being close to God in the covenant relationship. You're distant from him, you're not experiencing the wonderful results of being close.
- Hank Smith: 00:36:30 Josh, is that what Lehi's referring to then in 1 Nephi 36? "He feared lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord." He's not concerned what you and I might think is, "Oh, they're going to outer darkness." This is they're stepping away from that relationship, that covenant?

Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:36:47	Exactly, in the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon, when they talk about this, you can think of being in the presence of the Lord in two different ways. There's both an afterlife sense to this, where final judgment and being in the celestial kingdom in God's presence or somewhere else, you have kind of an afterlife sense of being in his presence or not in his presence.
	00:37:06	But there's also many scriptures that talk about this in this life, that this begins right now. We can be in his presence right now in this life before we're literally physically there in the celestial kingdom, or you cannot be in his presence in this life. So, when we're close to him in this life, we have his spirit to be with us, for example. That's one of the great blessings of baptism and confirmation is having that member of the Godhead with you always.
	00:37:31	In the Old Testament, they often talk about the tabernacle or the temple, the house of the Lord being a place where you go to be physically close to him in his presence. They'll use that term a lot there. They long to go to the temple, so that they can be in the presence of the Lord. So, we can think of it in afterlife terms, but we don't want to just restrict it to that. We've got to recognize that this is a dynamic that can change right here, right now.
	00:37:55	So when Lehi is saying, "Oh, I fear that you're not going to be in God's presence," he could be talking about both, that I fear for your eternal future, and right now you're not experiencing the blessings of that close, intimate binding relationship with God because you've chosen to move away. So now, let's look at that phrase, "Cast off," that Lehi uses.
John Bytheway:	00:38:14	That was my next question, because instead of walking away, cast sounds like you've been thrown, so I'm glad you're going to talk about it.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:38:22	Lehi fears that they're going to be cast off. So, the Book of Mormon uses the phrase, like the Old Testament, "Cast off from the Lord's presence." Sometimes it'll also say cut off from the Lord's presence, mostly synonymous in what this means here. That means that you go from being in the presence of the Lord, experiencing that close relationship, to now you're separated from the presence of the Lord, not experiencing that close relationship.
John Bytheway:	00:38:46	It's one thing to be in the presence of God, another one to just kind of walk away or dwindle in unbelief, but cast or cut off

sounds a lot more physical separation with some force. I don't know.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:38:59 When we're talking about the presence of the Lord and this image of being cast off, there's a fantastic article on this by Dr. Jennifer C. Lane, who you've had on the podcast before. So, she wrote an article called The Presence of the Lord, and it deals with both the Old Testament and Lehi's dream and Nephi's vision, exactly what we're talking about now. And you can read this for free at the BYU Religious Study Center website, that's rsc.byu.edu. I would recommend that, and I'm going to be riffing off her great work here, plus my own analyses of these verses. Dr. Lane kind of breaks this all down and shows how the Old Testament context is playing out here with Lehi and Nephi and the language that they're using.
- 00:39:40 When we see cast off in the Old Testament, it's usually translating a Hebrew verb, *zanach*. You might see it in other translations as to cast off, to reject, to abandon, but it's a relationship term. It's talking about people that were once close together, and now there's a split happening where they are being separated. And what you see is in the Old Testament, a lot of people express some great anxiety and fear that they are going to be cast off from the Lord's presence or that they already have been, and they're worried that they won't be able to undo this.
- 00:40:13 So, I'll just read a few examples here, so we can get a sense of how they're using this language, and that'll help us understand where Lehi's coming from. Psalm 44, for example, verse 17, has people complaining, "All this has come upon us, yet we have not forgotten thee. Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant." So, they're experiencing hard times, and they're saying, "Hey, we thought we were doing okay in the covenant, but we seem to not be." Verse 23, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off for ever." And that's the verb *zanach* again.
- 00:40:48 And then in verse 24, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face?" And that's *paniym*, it can also mean your presence. "And forgettest our affliction and our oppression, for our soul is bowed down to the dust, our belly cleaveth unto the earth, arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercy's sake." And that's the word *hesed*. Help us for your *hesed*. You're supposed to be loyal to us, because of the covenant, and we're not seeing your help. Don't cast us off, and give us an act of *hesed* here.
- 00:41:17 And then there's others, like Psalm 60:1, or Psalm 74, verse one, where they'll say, "Why are you casting us off? Please don't cast

us off forever." I'll read Psalm 77:7. It asks, "Will the Lord cast off forever?" Rhetorical question. "Will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy," his hesed, "Clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"

00:41:50 So, you can see the struggle this person, the psalmist is experiencing as life is going nuts and they're wondering, has God truly abandoned them forever? Psalm 89, starting in verse one starts off pretty positive. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord." The acts of hesed of the Lord forever. "With my mouth, I will make known thy faithfulness to all generations." And then he quotes the Lord as we skip down several verses in the Psalm where God says, "I've made a covenant. My loving kindness, my hesed I will not utterly take, my covenant I will not break." But then the psalmist feels like, well, God, you've promised this and yet I'm not feeling this in my life right now." Verse 38, "But thou has cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth." And I want you to notice here, it doesn't say cast off from your presence, but that's always implied.

00:42:38 So, you can just say cast off and the presence part is implied because that's what's built in here. This is a relationship term. We're in his presence and now we feel like we've been kicked out. Verse 39, "Thou has made void the covenant." And then it asks, verse 46, "How long, Lord, wilt thou hide thyself forever, shall thy wrath burn like fire?" It doesn't resolve this. They just feel like they're not in his presence and they're trying to fix this. I'll do one last example. It's from Lamentations chapter three, which is another Psalm-like exploration of this. This is a person who feels like their life is just the worst right now, that God has forsaken them. Verse one, "I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He had led me and brought me into darkness but not into light, surely against me he has turned. He turned his hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin has he made old, he has broken my bones."

00:43:34 And it goes on and on for many verses about God is mistreating them. They feel like God has let them down and God's actually out to get them. But then in verse 21, it takes a turn. This is Lamentations 3 still as they say, "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." Meaning this is what I remember when I feel like this. 22, "It is of the Lord's mercies, his acts of hesed that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not." Verse 31, "For the Lord will not cast off forever, but though he caused grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies or his acts of hesed, for he does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."

- 00:44:20 So, they have that hope that because of God's hesed, even though this person feels like God's putting them through the ringer right now and is actually out to get them, they're trying to trust and hope in the fact that because of that hesed that's there, that commitment to that covenant relationship, that even though this person feels like they've been cast off out of God's presence right now, that it's not going to stay that way forever.
- 00:44:40 Now, the Old Testament also explores, why is it that we get cast off? Is God being just capricious? Is this arbitrary? The sense you get is that no, we have full control over this. We choose whether we are cast off or not. For example, 1 Chronicles chapter 28:9 has David giving advice to Solomon and says, "Thou Solomon my son know thou the God of thy father and serve him with a perfect heart and with the willing mind for the Lord Jehovah searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever." That verb zanach again. So, there it's clear that the person Solomon here has the choice to make. They can seek God or forsake him, and if they forsake him, then they're cast off from his presence, but they're fully in control of that. The issue is not what God wants to do. The issue is what we want to do. You see this as well in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is even better on clarifying the role of agency and the importance of choice. The 2 Nephi 7, verse one has a quote from Isaiah 50, but it adds line to the beginning that's not in the Bible that helps clarify this even more. It opens by saying, "Yay, for thus saith the Lord speaking to Israel who has gone astray Have I put thee away or have I cast thee off forever?"
- 00:46:19 And then we get into the Isaiah part, "For thus saith the Lord, yay to whom have I sold you? Behold for your iniquities, ye have sold yourselves and for your transgressions has this happened." The Book of Mormon brings in that cast off language there, again, stressing that God doesn't want to do this. This is the natural result of our choices and it makes sense when you think of this in terms of a relationship. If someone in a relationship is treating the other person like garbage, if they're being abusive, if they're not trying to build the relationship, then the relationship is simply going to suffer. It's not going to be great if one of the parties is mistreating the other and doing things that hurt them. The Book of Mormon uses this cast off language a lot.
- 00:47:03 Nephi is going to use it in the chapters we read today, but it's clear always in the Book of Mormon, especially that we have full

control over this. We choose whether we're in God's presence, enjoying the benefits of that close relationship or we choose whether to walk away and be cast off from his presence. The words that we typically use to describe this are repentance and rebellion. If we're repenting, we're doing those things that move us closer to the Lord so that our relationship is close and we're in his presence. The opposite of repenting is rebelling, where we're making conscious choices to move away from the Lord and do things that damage our relationship, so that we no longer feel close.

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| Hank Smith: | 00:47:39 | Josh, let me ask you a question. In that Lamentations, I think you read, there was this lament about being cut off. Did you say they turned it around? Is that the chapter? |
| Dr. Joshua Sears: | 00:47:50 | Yeah, Lamentations 3. They're lamenting that God's out to get them and there's lots of graphic imagery about how God is ruining their life, and then in verse 20, when it says it turns, "This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope," and then they list the things that the remembering about the covenant and the loyalty and all of that. So, they're saying this is what gets me through this. I've got all these reasons to think God is out to get me, my life is terrible, but I'm going to remember these things about the covenant to give me hope that somehow this is going to work out. The Lord does not cast off forever. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:48:23 | That would make perfect sense if Nephi is reading things like that for 2 Nephi 4, his lament, "Oh, this is awful. My life is awful. Things are awful, but-" |
| Dr. Joshua Sears: | 00:48:33 | I know in whom I have trusted. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:48:35 | Yeah, that's 2 Nephi 4:19, he turns it around. It sounded so familiar. I thought, "I don't read Lamentations that often." |
| Dr. Joshua Sears: | 00:48:44 | Well, lots of people have analyzed 2 Nephi 4 as a psalm of lament. So, Nephi follows the patterns there. You express the woes and the problems, and then you have that pivot where you're now expressing your trust and you're saying, "You know what? This is going to work out because of the one I'm trusting in." In his dream, 1 Nephi 8, Lehi in verse 17 was desirous that Laman and Lemuel should come and partake of the fruit. Verse 18, "But they would not come unto me and partake of the fruit." Verse 35, "And Laman and Lemuel partook not of the fruit said my father." So, this is why now he fears for Laman and Lemuel, lest they should be cast off forever because they're making choices that are moving them away from the Lord. That's what happens with rebellion. If the rebellion is severe |

enough and long enough, eventually there's a rupture in the relationship where you're no longer in the Lord's presence experiencing that closeness and the warmth and the joy and the blessings there.

- Hank Smith: 00:49:38 Rebel versus repent. Josh, I'm really glad you made that... John calls it a sermon in a sentence. That's a sermon in three words, repent or rebel, rebel or repent.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:49:49 We should clarify though, we all struggle with our day-to-day sins and just challenges of life, and that daily struggle does not mean that we're rebels or that we're being cast off from the presence of the Lord. Elder Renlund in the April 2023 General Conference gave a talk called Accessing God's Power Through Covenants, and he offered this important clarification on that. I'm reading from the end notes actually, end note seven. He says, "Everyone stumbles on occasion, but God is patient with our stumbles and has given us the gift of repentance, even after breaking a covenant. As Elder Richard G. Scott taught," so now it's Elder Renlund quoting Elder Scott, "The Lord sees weaknesses differently than he sees rebellion because when the Lord speaks of weaknesses, it is always with mercy." So, that's an important thing to remember, just because we slip up doesn't mean that we're a rebel and God's kicking us out.
- 00:50:48 Cast off is describing in the scriptures usually prolonged, severe rebellion. There's a difference between someone saying, "God, this week I messed up. I tried and I messed up, but I want to take the sacrament, I want to keep trying. Please help me to do better." That's a different attitude than someone saying, "You know what? I don't care. The church can't tell me what to do. I'm going to sleep with who I want. I'm going to eat what I want. I don't care what the commandments are," and you're not even trying anymore. That's a rebellious attitude and it's different from trying but messing up, which is something that we all experience. We want to be careful that we're not being too hard on ourselves, while recognizing that there are real consequences for turning from the Lord and breaking his commandments.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:27 You're not a rebel, you're just weak. A message from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:35 Yes, this then is the setup. Lehi and Nephi and the rest of the family, they're afraid for Laman and Lemuel. We know that there's problems. So, that is some background to chapter 12 where Nephi is going to see what's the future history of their family, what's going to happen here? And this is set up from this

concern they have about, "Some members of our family are leaving the covenant path and we're worried about them. We fear that they're going to make choices where they're going to be out of God's presence forever and where they're never going to repent and come back." Before we start reading chapter 12 though, I want to read one verse from chapter 11 that's a little bit of setup here. In chapter 11, verse seven, the Spirit tells Nephi that in the vision he's about to see there's something in particular he needs to watch out for, a special event.

00:52:24 So the Spirit says, "Hey, Nephi, you're going to see the tree, and then later in the vision, thou shall also behold a man descending out of heaven and him shall ye witness." So, Nephi is told of all the stuff he's going to see in this vision, "Watch for this moment when a man descends out of heaven," apparently that's going to be significant. So, we're watching for that and it never happens in chapter 11, all of Jesus' mortal ministry, it never says he descends from heaven. Finally, in chapter 12 is where the promised moment arrives, chapter 12, Nephi sees the promised land, he sees Nephites, he sees Lamanites, he sees generations of them living there, and he sees all the destruction that happens in 3 Nephi, vapor of darkness and earthquakes and all this. And then chapter 12, verse six, and I saw the heavens open and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven."

00:53:17 That's significant, not just because it's Jesus visiting the Nephites and we love that, but this is the moment the spirit told them to watch for, that there's going to be something significant about this. So, then we're kind of wondering, "What is it? Why is this visit such a big deal?" And then the rest of the chapter is a little bit perplexing because verses six through 10 has Jesus ministering to the Nephites, and we love it. It's great, it's beautiful, but then starting in verse 11, Jesus has taken off and the rest of the chapter is about what happens to Nephites and Lamanites after Jesus' visit. And this is tremendously disappointing because it kind of looks like Jesus' visit failed.

Hank Smith: 00:54:01 Just for the record, that could be my autobiography title: Tremendously Disappointing.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:54:10 You still have time to turn this around, Hank.

Hank Smith: 00:54:12 Okay. Nevertheless, I know.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:54:15 Yeah. He sees three and a half generations passed away in righteousness, and then they all get wicked again. In fact, if you start in verse 11 and go to the end of the chapter, there's 13 verses about the post-ministry effects of his visit. Two of them

are positive, 11 of them are negative. The vision here spends a lot more time focusing on how everything falls apart after Jesus's visit than it spends talking about how awesome the visit was.

00:54:42 And this is a little hard for us to notice, because we've read Third Nephi, we've seen that movie The Testaments of one fold and one shepherd. We love the visit of Jesus to the Nephites. For us, it's this big moment in our minds. We just got to stop and appreciate that in the vision, as the angels framing the story for Nephi at this point, Jesus's visit looks like it's a spectacular failure that has only very temporary positive benefits for them, and then they're back worse than they ever were before. For Nephi, this must be incredibly disappointing.

00:55:13 And that raises the question, why did the spirit say to watch out for this visit if it looks like it ends in apparent failure? And it turns out that this visit is actually more important than it looks like at first, but we don't find out why it's so important here in chapter 12. We're going to have to wait until the end of chapter 13. We have to hold that thought here, that this looks like an apparent failure, things are not going great, but there's something that happened here that was more significant. But Nephi doesn't learn that at this point in the visit. We'll have to circle back to this in a chapter and a half. Otherwise, we'll just hold the thought and notice that chapter 12 ends with them dwindling in unbelief, and that they're in spiritual darkness, and that this is not great.

John Bytheway: 00:55:54 I love what you're saying here, because I remember at the end of this, Nephi is not saying, wow, it's so great. It's so wonderful. Actually, he's considering that his afflictions are above all. In First Nephi 15, sorry to jump ahead, but this helps me understand why. What has he seen? As you described it, he's seen some of the failure of his own people. I don't know at this point I might've said, "Laman and Lemuel, you're right. Why don't you guys go back home, and I'll take care of Dad and Mom?" Because he just saw his people get destroyed by the Lamanites.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:56:28 Yep. Now we move into chapter 13, and here we're going to start dealing with Gentiles. And here's, I want to back up a few chapters actually again to review a little bit of what Lehi taught last time, because it'll help us appreciate this. If we go back to chapter 10, starting around verse 11, Lehi had told his family a very, very bare bones history of the House of Israel and Gentiles, very bare bones. So in verse 11, well, let's start with verse 12. Lehi says, "The House of Israel should be compared

like unto an olive tree whose branches should be broken off and should be scattered upon all the face of the earth." Verse 14, Lehi says that the House of Israel will be gathered together again. Natural branches of the olive tree are the remnants of the House of Israel being grafted in and coming back.

00:57:20 Basically, Lehi says the House of Israel has two basic steps. They're going to be scattered and they're going to be gathered. We've got those two. That's about as simple of the history of Israel as you could summarize right there, scattering and gathering. But what Lehi also does is he gives them two steps in the history of Gentiles. Back in New Testament times, Messiah manifests himself by the Holy Ghost to them, they come to the gospel. And then in the last days, he says the Gentiles will receive the fullness of the gospel. Those are the two steps for Gentiles. Lehi is giving such a bare bones brief summary of the history there, it leaves a lot of unanswered questions. Which I think is why Nephi's brothers in chapter 15 when the vision's done, Nephi goes to them and says, "Hey, what are you wondering about?" In chapter 15 verse 7, they say, "Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive tree, and also concerning the Gentiles." In other words, that was such a quick summary, we got questions.

00:58:21 They might be wondering questions such as the following: why do the Gentiles have to get the gospel twice? Something's fishy about that. They get it back in New Testament times, and then he says they get it again in the last days. There seems to be a missing step in between those two. Why are they having to get it again? Lehi doesn't tell them that, and Nephi's vision is going to get the info to flesh that out.

00:58:43 Another question might be, why did Lehi say the Gentiles have to get that gospel again the second time first, and only then can the House of Israel be gathered? Lehi stops and clarifies that the sequence there is important, but he doesn't say why. What's the relationship between Gentiles getting the gospel again, and House of Israel getting gathered? He doesn't say. That seems to be where the brothers are maybe getting confused. Seems to be some missing pieces to this puzzle that Lehi didn't explain. Nephi's vision now in chapter 13 is going to explore that, and he's going to get all those answers so that he can explain it to them in chapter 15.

Hank Smith: 00:59:20 Josh, for our listeners who are hearing the term Gentile and maybe don't understand what you mean, can you give us a quick definition from Lehi's point of view?

Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:59:32	Yeah. From their point of view, Gentile is from a Hebrew term that just means the nations. It's everybody who's not Israel, not descended from Abraham. If you're dividing up the world into two conceptual categories, you're either part of the covenant family, Israel, or you're not. We have this idea from Genesis that Israel is supposed to bless all these other nations, the Gentiles, through the covenant that they have. And in the longer version of that account from the Book of Abraham, you may prefer The Pearl of Great Price and Modern Revelation, it explains that as these Gentiles come to the covenant, that they'll rise up and bless Abraham as their father. They're adopted in, they're part of the family now, so they get to join. That's some clarification we get there from the book of Abraham.
Hank Smith:	01:00:15	The gospel's going to go to them, New Testament, but then they're going to get it before the gospel returns to the House of Israel. The two questions are, why do they have to get it again? They already got it. And why do they have to get it before we get it? Meaning Lehi and-
Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:00:34	That's what this chapter is going to explain. Chapter 13 of 1st Nephi, Nephi's vision is going to flesh out all these details where Lehi kind of left them hanging.
Hank Smith:	01:00:42	Okay.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:00:42	Chapter 13 opens, Nephi sees many nations and kingdoms. And verse 3, he reports, "These are the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles." We're very much now leaving the house of Israel behind for a second, and looking at the Gentile situation here. And then in verse 4, we get the formation of this great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches, that's seeking after gold, and silver, and harlots, and all these worldly things.
Hank Smith:	01:01:11	Josh, could I compare that to the great and spacious building?
Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:01:15	I think we should compare that to the great and spacious building.
John Bytheway:	01:01:18	In fact, in the Come, Follow Me Manual, there's a statement from President Dallin H. Oaks. This is what he said. Well, I'll just read the paragraph from the manual, because there's a quotation within the paragraph.
	01:01:29	" President Dallin H. Oaks explained that the great and abominable church Nephi described represents any philosophy

or organization that opposes belief in God. And the captivity into which this church seeks to bring the saints will not be so much physical confinement, as the captivity of false ideas."

01:01:51 I'm glad you brought this up, because a church, we think of a building with a steeple, but he's talking about any philosophy. They don't necessarily have a building or organization that opposes belief in God, but it's referred to as a church in First Nephi 13.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:06 And this might be a good point to point out something we haven't mentioned yet, is that a lot of people have seen Nephi's vision as being very apocalyptic, which I'm using in the technical sense that we learned last month when we were in the Book of Revelation. Where apocalyptic visions are a kind of Jewish literature, or a visionary experience where just like in Revelation and other examples, here you have an angel guide working a prophet through a history of the world, especially the end times. And in these visions, everything is very, very symbolic. You're not meant to understand a lot of it in physical, literal ways.

01:02:40 The church thing here is an example of that. We got that great insight from President Oaks. And you can see this at play, for example, in chapter 14 when the angel says, "Behold, there are save two churches only. One is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil. Wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God, belongeth to that great church which is the mother of abominations." And again, we're not meant to be like, is this a church I can look up in the phone book? This is apocalyptic. Which means, in apocalyptic visions, everything's very black and white, good versus evil, all or nothing. There's no shades of gray, or nuance or anything like that. The angel's presenting this as a very one versus the other sort of a thing.

01:03:21 It would be a mistake then to be like, well, that church over there, they must be the one on that side. Like President Oaks said, it's any force, philosophy, practice that either brings you closer to Jesus or against Jesus. That's probably the sense here.

Hank Smith: 01:03:34 Fantastic. Thank you for clarifying that.

John Bytheway: 01:03:37 And Josh, I think that's super important. This verse has kicked up a little bit of dust. You go out on a mission, you might've had it quoted to you, because they are thinking of a church like when you can look up in the phone book. Years ago Dr. Stephen Robinson wrote that article called Warring Against the Saints of

God. And he said, "This church is more about who has your heart than who has your records." Do you remember that statement? Because there are folks that are striving to follow Christ in all sorts of different physical churches, and they would not be called the whore of all the earth. I'm glad you're explaining it this way, and that President Oaks referred to it that way. Anything that discounts or opposes a belief in God, type of a thing. I like what Stephen Robinson said, who has your heart, not who has your records.

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| Hank Smith: | 01:04:25 | John, I have written in my scriptures, I wish I had written down who I got this from. This kingdom of the devil, this great and abominable church, this great and spacious building. Even in the book of Revelation, the symbols of the dragon, and the woman on the waters. Any social, political or economic system that destroys lives and souls. This might be a little discouraging, but I read that just the pornography industry alone in the world makes over a hundred billion dollars a year. That's more than the NFL, Major League Baseball and the NBA combined. No wonder if Nephi sees things like that, it's this great and abominable group system. |
| Dr. Joshua Sears: | 01:05:14 | I think it's appropriate to compare this to the imagery in Revelation. Because at the end of chapter 14, Nephi is going to see John in the Book of Revelation, and he's told that there's connections between his vision and that one. Looking at the apocalyptic imagery in Revelation and helping it shed some light on what's going on here, I think the text is openly inviting us to do that. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:05:34 | When I've taught this, I've always appreciated Footnote 10 D. It gives, maybe we could call it a non-apocalyptic interpretation of what church is called the whore of all the earth. It takes you to 2nd Nephi 10:16. And that verse says, "Wherefore he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, male and female, shall perish. For they are they who are the whore of all the earth. For they who are not for me, are against me, saith our God." That's a nice footnote to, oh okay, shed some more light on what Nephi saw, or how it's described apocalyptically and how it's described in 2nd Nephi. |
| Dr. Joshua Sears: | 01:06:12 | All right. We have this picture here of Gentile Christianity. We get descriptions of them and coming across the waters to the land where Nephi and Laman and Lemuel's descendants are living. And let's pick up verse 20. In 1st Nephi 13, verse 20, "It came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land, and I beheld a book and it was carried forth among them." And the angel pauses here for a long time to talk about this |

book. This is a really important historical moment. "The angel said unto me, knowest thou the meaning of the book?" Verse 22, "And I said unto him, I know not." I would be thinking, you're the angel, you tell me.

Hank Smith: 01:06:52 I love Nephi, he's honest. He probably thought the same thing. I know not. I know God loves His children, but I don't know the book.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:07:00 Then in verse 23, the angel explains the contents of the book. "Behold, it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew." It's a Jewish book. "The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the House of Israel. And it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets. And it is a record like unto the engravings which were upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many. Nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the House of Israel. Wherefore, they have great worth unto the Gentiles."

01:07:37 We got to break this down, because this is packed full of fun stuff. He describes the Bible, of course, as what we're talking about, and he describes it as a kind of container. He says three times, it contains, it contains, it contains. What does it contain? Twice, he says, "It contains the Lord's covenants with the House of Israel." And that's what we call the Abrahamic Covenant. In fact, Abrahamic Covenant is not a scriptural term. It's just a lot easier to say than the actual scriptural term, which is, "The covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the House of Israel," which is a mouthful.

01:08:10 So it contains the Abrahamic Covenant, and it says it also contains many of the prophecies of the holy prophets, which I don't see as being a big different thing here. If you look at Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Hosea and Amos, what are they talking about? The Abrahamic Covenant. We've got the covenants themselves spelled out, maybe some history record of the covenant playing out. We've got prophecies of gathering, and things like that. But he's saying that basically everything to do in the Bible here revolves around these covenants. This is why it's important.

01:08:40 And what's striking here, is most people today don't see the Bible that way. If I were to go to New York, and you do one of those things where you stop people on the street with a microphone and a TV camera, and ask them a question out of the blue, and I were to go to a hundred Christians on the streets of New York and say, "Excuse me, sir, do you believe the Bible?"

Awesome, great. Why is it important?" How many out of a hundred do you think are going to go, "Oh man, love the Bible. It's important because it's got the Lord's covenants with Israel"? I doubt we're going to get very many people saying it that way.

Hank Smith: 01:09:13 Even if you went to a Latter-day Saint chapel and asked that, you might not get it.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:09:18 Exactly. Now, Christians appreciate the Bible for many awesome reasons. They might be like, it's got awesome stories of faith, it's got prophecies of Jesus's coming. But the covenants with Israel are not going to jump to their minds as the top reason the Bible's important. It should be striking to us that that's why the angel says the Bible's important. If people today are not seeing it the way the angel sees it, that should invite some questions.

Hank Smith: 01:09:46 Coming up in part two of this episode.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:09:50 I think this is one of the most significant verses in the whole Book of Mormon, and I'm about to make my case for that.

God Plays the Long Game

GUEST: JOSHUA M. SEARS



- John Bytheway: 00:01 Welcome to part two with Dr. Josh Sears, 1 Nephi: 11-15.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:07 He concludes by saying, "The writings in here are of great worth unto Gentiles." We've got a quintessentially Jewish book record of the Jews with their Jewish covenants, but it's important to Gentiles, those that are not Jews. And that's where you have to really understand the Abrahamic covenant in order to make sense of what he's saying.
- 00:26 When we understand that the new and everlasting covenant and that intimate binding, exalting relationship with God is the reason all of us came here in the first place and that God has given that covenant to a certain covenant family and that they're charged with bringing it to everyone else, and it's only through Israel that anyone can get those covenant blessings, then we can start to see why for Gentiles, non-Jews learning about and coming to those Jewish covenants are so important.
- 00:55 When we understand that picture, we can make sense of the angel's words, but again, most people today aren't going to look at the Bible and say "That's what's going on." So that's our first clue that something is amiss, if people now don't see the Bible the way the angel sees it. We've already set up something is not matching up here.
- 01:14 Verse 24 (Chapter 13), "The angel said unto me, thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew, and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew, it contained the fullness of the gospel of the Lord of whom the 12 apostles bear record. And they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God. Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity to the Gentiles according to the truth which is in God."
- 01:35 And then in verse 26, things take a turn. "After they go forth by the hand of the 12 apostles of the Lamb," so now we've got Old Testament and New Testament, "from the Jews unto the

Gentiles, thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches. For behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious, and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away."

02:04 Now it says many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. There are some Latter-day saints who have read this and they've said, "Oh, this is the covenant of baptism. This is the covenant of eternal marriage. This is the covenant of the sacrament." But in context, I don't think that's where Nephi is putting the focus. Certainly those are part of the bigger picture, but we've already repeated multiple times this reference to the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel. So I think that's still implied here, that it's the covenants with Israel that are being taken away. And what are they being taken away from? It's from the gospel of the Lamb.

02:39 He is going to mention down in verse 28 and again in verse 29, that some stuff is taken out of the book by which you might imagine textual tampering with manuscripts of the Bible. But that's not the thing that the angel stresses at the beginning. It starts with taking away these covenants which are plain and precious from the gospel itself. And only secondarily do we get to the point where the book is ever messed with.

03:04 Sometimes we imagine that people manipulated the Bible and took things out, and that led to doctrinal misunderstanding. The angel seems to present it in the reverse sequence that doctrinal understanding is affected first and then later that determines how people interpret what's going on in the Bible.

Hank Smith: 03:21 That's interesting. You would think that that would be reversed. You're right, that it would go from the text first, which would take away from the doctrinal understanding. But verse 26 starts with, "it's been taken away from the gospel," then later taken from the text.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 03:37 Yeah. And I'll read a quick quote here from Dr. John Welch who's a Latter-day saint scholar a lot of us are familiar with. He was describing these verses, and I'll just read a little snippet from him here. This is a good insight. He says, "First things would be taken away, not from the texts or prototext of the Bible, but from the gospel itself." In the words of the angel, the first thing mentioned is that the Gentiles would take away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious. This stage possibly could have occurred more by

altering the meaning or understanding of the concepts taught by the Lord than by changing the words themselves.

- 04:17 Later, Nephi says that there were many plain and precious things taken away from the book. This step apparently should be understood as a consequence of the preceeding step since verse 28 begins with wherefore. Thus the eventual physical loss of things from the actual text of the Bible was perhaps less a cause than it was the result of the fact that at first the gospel and the covenants had been lost or taken away.
- Hank Smith: 04:43 Fascinating. Yeah, that's an interesting reversal of maybe what you would think.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 04:49 And then the angel explains to Nephi all this they have done that they might pervert the right way of the Lord, verse 27, and that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men.
- 05:01 So this reinforces us too, that what is probably going on in Gentile Christianity here is bad interpretations rather than it is maliciously messing with texts. Because when you pervert something, you're deliberately altering it. And we're talking about the gospel and these truths there. And then it says that they might blind people's eyes. And when you're blind to something, it's still there in front of you, but you're not seeing what should be obvious in front of you.
- 05:28 So you can have the text of the Bible talking about the covenants with Israel right there, but you're blind to the significance of it. I mean, when you look at it, even with restoration scripture adding and clarifying a lot of amazing things, the bulk of what we know about the covenant is still there in the Old Testament.
- 05:47 It's right there. We have Genesis 12. We have Genesis 15. We have Genesis 22. We've got descriptions of the blessings and cursings in the covenant in places like Deuteronomy 28 through 30 or Leviticus 26. We've got this stuff laid out. We've got the prophecies of Isaiah. We've got the history of the scattering. It's all still there. And yet what can happen and apparently did happen early in Christianity was they look at that stuff and don't see the significance of it.
- 06:14 And we've had some Latter-day Saint scholars who have presented reconstructions of what the angel might be talking about that are based on texts that you can find in early

Christianity. And what seems to be going on is that early Christians developed this idea, today it's called the doctrine of supersessionism or replacement theology. And those are fancy-schmancy terms, but in a nutshell, what they mean is that early Gentile Christians came to see themselves as replacing Israel, replacing the Jews as God's covenant people.

- 06:47 And there's different ways this has been understood. So I'm overly simplifying 2000 years of discussion. But at the risk of oversimplifying, they basically said either Israel, the Jews, they blew it when they crucified Jesus and therefore God is done with them and he works with us now. Or they might say, Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled when Jesus came and therefore it's done. It's no longer the program. Now God works with Gentile Christianity broadly speaking.
- 07:15 They see Israel as being irrelevant, as being replaced, as not having a significant role to play in God's plans anymore. And that seems to align really well with what the angel seems to be describing here about them taking away these plain and precious truths, in particular the covenants of the Lord that he's made with Israel.
- 07:35 And the angel in the vision is constantly bringing up these covenants as if to remind us as readers that if you don't understand the covenants, you're not going to get what I'm talking about here.
- 07:45 For example, in chapter 14 verse 8, the angel stops and says to Nephi, "'Rememberest thou the covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel?' I said unto him, 'Yea.'" And then the angel just goes on. They keep puncturing the vision with references like that as if the angel's saying to Nephi or Nephi is saying to us as readers, you got to keep these covenants in mind or this vision itself isn't even going to make sense. You've got to see the significance of this.
- 08:12 We probably have a situation where chapter 13 seems to be presenting the great apostasy as we call it today, is fundamentally being about Gentile Christianity losing their covenant consciousness of misunderstanding the Abrahamic covenant. And when we really understand the covenant and how all encompassing it is, then it makes sense how this would lead people to stumble. And why in verse 29, Satan would have great power over people because the new and everlasting covenant is all about our relationship with God. It's the whole point of everything.

	08:45	And the covenants with Israel is that they're going to bring this to everyone else on earth. This is God's program for getting this relationship out to everybody. So when you don't understand that, you're understanding such fundamental basic truths of the entire plan of salvation, it's no wonder that that has a rippling effect at all sorts of other doctrines.
Hank Smith:	09:05	Josh, that was really eye-opening thing you just said there. The great apostasy, it's not about losing the Bible completely or losing Jesus. It was about losing the covenant consciousness. That fits right there with 1 Nephi 13.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	09:21	Yeah. And it's worth noting, the way we often talk about the great apostasy today typically as Latter-day Saints it's a little bit different than the framing the angel's giving it here. Not that one's wrong and one's right, they're just different ways of telling the story.
	09:34	We often talk about loss of priesthood keys or church structure or apostolic leaders or doctrine of the Godhead. And those are all true that those can get altered. But the angel doesn't mention any of that stuff here in the chapter. It's just what I'm trying to point out. The way he's framing the story, he identifies the root cause of all these other things as being a misunderstanding fundamentally of our covenant identity and how that works.
	09:58	And then all the other things we talk about today, those can be details that we add to the story, but the angel seems to be going deeper than those things to saying that something about covenants went really wrong and that we look at the Bible correctly, the way the angel sees it in order to really appreciate how fundamental that has been all along.
	10:16	And the Book of Mormon hits back against supersessionism, not just here, but lots of other places. This is one of its major doctrinal contributions actually. And as Latter-day Saints, we often don't recognize that as being that big of a deal in the Book of Mormon because we don't know the history of Christian interpretation. So when the Book of Mormon hits this idea hard, we don't really see the significance of it.
	10:38	But the Book of Mormon is very emphatic frequently that the covenant with Abraham is not fulfilled when Jesus comes, that it's still the program. For example, in chapter 15 verse 18, Nephi points to the covenant, which he says should be fulfilled in the latter days, not the meridian of time. Or as another example, when Jesus shows up in 3 Nephi, he clarifies what he has

fulfilled up to that point right after his resurrection and what he has not fulfilled.

11:12 He says in verse 7, 3 Nephi 15 verse 7, "And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which have been spoken concerning things which are to come. For behold, the covenant, which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled, but the law which was given to Moses happened to end in me."

11:33 So law of Moses, yes, that was done, but not the Abrahamic covenant. That is still the program. There are still those promises that are vouchsafed for Jacob's children. God is still going to gather Israel. They are still the missionary force to bring everything to the world. And the covenant is still the way that we come unto the Father, enter into relationship with him and receive all the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

11:56 So the Book of Mormon is trying to set that straight. And I think a little bit of the history here can help us appreciate how the Book of Mormon is correcting a very major false doctrine that it perceives to be out there.

Hank Smith: 12:06 Yeah. That's wonderful.

John Bytheway: 12:08 I think Dr. Robert L. Millet that we've had on before said once that the restoration of the gospel is in fact the restoration of the Abrahamic covenant, which was earthshaking to me to go, "Oh, okay." And we can throw around that phrase, plain and precious things all the time, but the sentence keeps going and also many covenants. I like the phrase you used a covenant consciousness, and I think President Nelson has spoken of that so often when he speaks of the covenant path.

Hank Smith: 12:36 John, this has been so insightful. It seems to me that the Book of Mormon people even lose their covenant consciousness. When you get past Jacob, the house of Israel is really not brought up again until 3 Nephi. King Benjamin doesn't really talk about it, Alma the younger, Helaman.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 12:58 Yeah. There's kind of a dip in that as a topic until Jesus shows up and brings it roaring back.

Hank Smith: 13:02 Yeah, this loss, this covenant consciousness seems to be something that's a little slippery. It can go pretty quick.

Dr. Joshua Sears:	13:10	Yeah, let's talk about Jesus then, because up to this point of the vision, we should notice that if we're stepping back and seeing a big picture of the world, things have not gone well now. We've mentioned several groups in this vision. We have the Jews. Lehi said that they were dwindling in unbelief, and we've had that in Nephi's vision. The House of Israel's gathered together to fight the 12 apostles of the Lamb.
	13:33	We've had Gentile Christians who now have kind of lost their covenantal moorings there, and they've got some significant problems. We've talked about Lehi's descendants, Nephites and Lamanites that survived Cumorah, that they're living in spiritual darkness. We've got the lost tribes of Israel, same thing's going on with them out there. So by this point in the vision, every single group, even if they had good moments in the past, they've all gone off the covenant path now.
	13:58	And if we were to stop the vision here we'd say, "Wow, Abrahamic covenant, that was a spectacular failure. God needs to scrap that and come up with some new plan because this is just simply not working."
	14:10	Fortunately, the vision keeps going. And what God is going to explain to Nephi now is that there is a plan in place to turn this all around and to actually not get one, not two, not three, but all of these groups turned around and back into the covenants. That's a pretty impressive feat to pull off considering everything's gone so sideways at this point in history. But there is a plan and he's got a plan to fix this.
	14:34	So we get this starting at the end of verse 34. "I will bring forth unto them in my own power much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious," the exact things that went wrong we're going to fix. Here's the plan, verse 35. "For behold, saith the Lamb, I will manifest myself unto thy seed." So Jesus talking to Nephi.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	15:00	So this could be talking about the entire Book of Mormon that he manifests himself to Nephites over centuries or specifically 3 Nephi where Jesus is going to show up there. We've already covered that in chapter 12, so that's probably the most immediate reference here. He's like, "Nephi, you already saw this. I'm going to visit your descendants. So I will manifest myself to thy seed that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious."
	15:22	And this is where we finally circle back to that visit of Jesus to the Nephites that remember back in chapter 12, looked like

kind of a failure, looked like it was really disappointing and that they had a few generations of righteousness and then that died out and they were wicked again. But here's where we learn why that visit was so important, maybe why the spirit told Nephi to watch out for it. It's that those Nephites wrote what he told them down.

15:50 And then he says, "After thy seed shall be destroyed," so after Cumorah happens and the civilization falls and they continue, "those that are left dwindle in unbelief and also the seed of thy brethren dwindling in unbelief, behold these things, the records shall be hid up to come forth unto the Gentiles by the gift and power of the Lamb. 'And in them shall be written my gospel,' saith the Lamb and my rock and my salvation."

16:17 So it turns out that Jesus' visit to the Nephites only helped them for a few generations. That's sad. But that visit is going to end up being monumentally important for all of world history because Jesus is going to teach them and have them write down the exact things He knows that people in the last days are not going to understand very well. 3 Nephi in particular and the rest of the Book of Mormon in general are being custom made, crafted so that the plain and precious things that are misunderstood in Christianity at large are going to be in the Book of Mormon so that it can get these Gentile Christians and reorient them back to their Abrahamic roots.

16:56 And this is another suggestion why when we're thinking about, "Well, what are the plain and precious things?" Latter-day Saints often jump to assume, "Well, that's talking about the stuff that's unique to us today like eternal marriage or the temple endowment or baptism for the dead or three kingdoms of glory. Those are the plain and precious things." And we assume that because we have them and we see a lot of other churches don't have that. But here, the Book of Mormon frames the Book of Mormon as the solution containing the plain and precious things that are meant to fix the plain and precious things that were lost.

17:26 And you'll notice the Book of Mormon doesn't have stuff like baptisms for the dead and three kingdoms of glory and all that. There's hints occasionally, but that's not the focus. What are the plain and precious things? Well, maybe we can look at 3 Nephi. What's in there? We have the Sermon on the Mount. Everybody has that. It's great. I'm not trying to put it down. He reinforces fundamental things of the gospel, faith, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, clarifying those things is fundamentally important.

- 17:56 We have Christian discipleship that's clarified, but where does Jesus spend most of his time in 3 Nephi? What are most of the chapters about? It's about the covenant, chapters 15, 16, into 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, chapter 30. Most of the chapters of 3 Nephi are about Jews and Gentiles scattering and gathering, fulfilling promises. All those things. That seems to be clearly where Jesus is focusing his attention in 3 Nephi. And it's as if he's saying, "I know you guys want me to talk about flashy stuff like details of the afterlife or things that you might really wish I had talked about instead, but this is what you actually need."
- 18:39 This is not your dessert, but it's your vegetables. This is what you guys really need to understand better is the covenant. He spends a lot of his time there talking about it in ways that sometimes perplexes and confuses us because we really do want the flashier stuff. We want details about the afterlife or the pre-mortal council or tell us more about what Gethsemane was like or all those things that we might wish Jesus had talked about instead.
- 19:02 But the fact that he spends the majority of his time in 3 Nephi talking about the covenant, I think really should signal to us that there's something there that's maybe more important than we usually give it credit for.
- Hank Smith: 19:14 What's interesting, Josh, is when he brings it up first with those Nephites and 3 Nephi. They seem to kind of glaze over. They're tired. He brings it up and he says, "This is so important. I need you to be a little more fresh. Go home, rest, come back." And he gets right back into Isaiah. But we're going to go through these covenants. This is fascinating. So let me make sure I understand. The plain and precious things which have been taken away goes back to what you told us earlier. They've lost their covenant consciousness and the Book of Mormon is going to solve that problem by bringing back these plain and precious things, which is the covenant consciousness.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 19:52 It's like the Book of Mormon is going to be our instructor to how to really read the Bible and see it the way the angel sees it. Because, again, people like Abraham often Christians are like, "Yeah, he's the father, the faithful. He's got some great stories," and you move on from there. The Book of Mormon trains us to look at the Abrahamic covenant and go, this is central. This is significant. And this gathering and gathering of Israel, this is all part of a huge master plan to bring the everlasting covenant out to everybody.

	20:22	The Book of Mormon is what teaches us to read Isaiah and Genesis and 2 Kings and all these other books with a new lens on where we suddenly see, "Wow, this is really important." It's not passe. It's not out of date. It's not over. This is still actively what we're participating in. President Nelson can make a statement like, "The gathering of Israel is the most important thing happening in the world today." And we go, "Yeah, that makes sense. Now that I understand how much this ties into every aspect of the gospel and God's whole purpose for us, that really makes sense now."
Hank Smith:	20:53	Josh, something that you said earlier, I want to make sure I get right. Oftentimes when the Lord comes and says, "The law of Moses is fulfilled," we might think, "Oh, that's the entire Old Testament that's been fulfilled." And you're pointing out, "No, no, no. Parts of the law of Moses are fulfilled, but the Abrahamic covenant is not even close to over."
Dr. Joshua Sears:	21:15	Exactly. So that's why 3 Nephi 15, Jesus takes a dozen verses to specifically clarify that the law of Moses is fulfilled. That is done. But he says, "The covenant I made with my people and the prophecies of the prophets," which are all basically about how the covenant is going to be fulfilled, that stuff is not done yet. He's very careful. That's not until the latter days. We're not yet at the point where the great Jehovah shall say the work is done.
Hank Smith:	21:41	Yeah. The gospel of Jesus Christ without the Abrahamic covenant is good. It's a good thing and it's a good thing to study, but you're missing a very important piece of his work.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	21:53	A lot of Christians have interpreted the Old Testament as being kind of a God works with a group of people and in the New Testament they'd interpret it more as individual salvation. We're all on this individual journey to get back to God. And the Book of Mormon really bridges those two together to be like, "It's both. You're saved as a people and you're saved as an individual." And these covenants, it's not like we had one program in Old Testament times and we start something new with the New Testament. It's one consistent program the Book of Mormon helps us bridge that intertestamental gap and see both of these as working in harmony.
Hank Smith:	22:26	Excellent, Josh.
John Bytheway:	22:27	That's something we've kind of lost thinking of being saved as a people. And I think in the Book of Mormon, what Samuel the Lamanite says, "Hey, 400 years we will no longer be a people." Who cares? I won't be alive. But if you're thinking of you as an

individual, but if you're thinking of you as a people, and I think they thought that way more anciently, so it did mean something to them because they as a people wanted to survive. Am I on base with that?

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 22:52 I think so. And this brings up something that Nephi himself will emphasize later in 15:19. As Nephi is talking to his brothers, he says, "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, spake much unto them concerning these things. Yea, I spake unto them concerning the restoration of the Jews in the latter days. And I did rehearse unto them the words of Isaiah who spake concerning the restoration of the Jews or of the House of Israel. And after they were restored, they should no more be confounded, neither should they be scattered again."
- 23:23 I had mentioned earlier that the way we often talk about the apostasy is a little different from the framing that 1 Nephi 13 gives it, which is just two different ways of telling the same story. So it's okay, but it's good to notice the framing there. Here's another point that when we talk about restoration, the way we talk about restoration today is a little bit different from the framing that the Book of Mormon gives the concept of restoration.
- 23:44 Because in the Book of Mormon when they use the word restoration, there's two different ways that they'll use it. One way is about afterlife, resurrection, final judgment being restored. That's one use of restoration is afterlife stuff. So I'm going to set those aside for a second and just look at the use of the word restoration in history in this life. And the Book of Mormon is a hundred percent consistent when it uses the word restoration. It never talks about the restoration of things. Instead, it's always the restoration of people, which I think is just a great different way to look at it.
- 24:21 So again, in the church today, we often talk about restoration of priesthood, keys, restoration of ordinances, restoration of certain doctrines, and the church of course. And those are all true. I'm not trying to put down that. We can still say that. Those things were restored and that's awesome. I love it. But in the Book of Mormon, the framing they have is I think, significant. You don't restore things. They focus on what those things are being restored for, which is people. Here, the restoration of the Jews, the restoration of the House of Israel. Or I'll read a few other examples.
- 24:50 2 Nephi 3:24, "Bringing to pass much restoration unto the house of Israel and unto the seed of thy brethren." 2 Nephi 30:8, "God

shall bring about the restoration of his people upon the earth." Alma 37:19, "The restoration of many thousands of the Lamanites." Helaman 15:11, "The restoration of our brethren, the Lamanites." 3 Nephi 29:1, "The covenant which the father hath made with the children of Israel concerning their restoration to the lands of their inheritance." Mormon 9:36, "Our brethren, yea even their restoration."

25:24 The Book of Mormon, a hundred percent consistent. When it's this life and we're using the word restoration, it's always about people who have fallen away from God and need to be restored to that state of covenant relationship and having that be whole again. Things do need to be restored, but those are always a means to an end. It's not like God restored the church and he's like, "I have now completed my work. I have a church. I'm going to sit here and look at it. It's great."

25:48 No, the church is for the people. The ordinance is the keys. These are all for people to bring them back to God. People have gone astray. People have left the path and we're bringing people home to God. I love that the Book of Mormon has got that focus. Even our articles of faith, the only time the word restoration appears in the articles of faith is the restoration of what or who? The restoration of the 10 tribes.

26:12 It doesn't talk there about restoring things. I just love that framing there. And it highlights the fact that these Book of Mormon prophets have their eye on, "Yeah, God has got to do all these things, but what's the ultimate aim?" It's he wants his kids to come back to him. He's got tools that are lost and restored to do that, but it's the kids that God has really got his focus on.

Hank Smith: 26:34 Wow.

John Bytheway: 26:35 Really good.

Hank Smith: 26:36 Really awesome. This is a little advanced Book of Mormon study. This is really intricate wonderful things.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 26:43 So let's just finish up the story here. From 1 Nephi 13. We have the Book of Mormon coming forth unto the Gentiles and that helps them out because it's got the plain and precious truths that they don't understand. So jumping down now to about verse 38, Nephi says, "These Gentiles are going to receive the Book of Mormon and then they are going to carry it to other people." Verses 38 and 39, Nephi sees books coming forth by

the power of lamb from the Gentiles unto them, meaning the remnant of the seed of my brethren. And these books are unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of my brethren and also the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth that the records of the prophets and the 12 apostles of the lamb are true. Old Testament, New Testament.

27:29 Again, the Book of Mormon teaching people how to read the Bible. And the angel says in verse 40, "These last records which thou has seen among the Gentiles shall establish the truth of the first records, the Bible, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them and shall make known to all kindred, tongues and people that you have a following list of doctrines that the Book of Mormon and these latter-day records are going to clarify. The Lamb of God is the Eternal Father." That's the original reading there without the "son of" part. The Lamb of God is the Eternal Father. Lamb of God is a title for the Messiah. Eternal Father is a title for Jehovah.

28:05 So the Messiah is Jehovah and he's the Savior of the world, and that all men must come unto him or they cannot be saved, and they must come according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb. And the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the record of thy seed as well as the records of the 12 apostles of the Lamb. Wherefore, they both shall be established in one for there's one God and one shepherd over all the earth.

28:31 So here's a basic recap of the story. Everybody has gone into apostasy. They're all off. But because the Nephites wrote down what Jesus told them, that custom message, it goes forth to the Gentiles in the last days, and then the Gentiles will take it to everybody else, to the Jews, to the descendants of Lehi, to the other remnants of Israel. And this convinces everybody of these amazing doctrines, invites them all to come participate in the full blessings of the covenant once again.

28:57 This is the plan. This is how we get Lehi's descendants back into the gospel. This is how other remnants of the house of Israel come back into the gospel. This is how Gentile Christians reorient themselves back to that Abrahamic kind of framework. It's the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon spends a lot of time talking about itself, but because it is the tool... This is why missionaries are handing out copies of the Book of Mormon left and right. This is what it's designed to do is to bring everybody back to this full sense of the covenant and to the one who makes that covenant possible, Jesus Christ.

Hank Smith:	29:28	Wow. That's wonderful, Josh. The Book of Mormon is, yes, meant to bring you to the church, but really it's to bring you into the covenant.
John Bytheway:	29:39	It just reminds me of Nephi's closing chapters in 2 Nephi where he says, "Here's how you're going to know. Here's the sign that the gathering has commenced, and it's the coming forth of the Book of Mormon." And here's how the world will react to the Book of Mormon. "A Bible, a Bible. We have a Bible. We need no more Bible." But that's the central part of Nephi's last lecture there is the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. I've always kind of seen it that way.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	30:04	Yeah, and that covenant emphasis there too, because he asks all the Gentile Christians, "How are you treating the Jews, my ancient covenant people? You've spurned them, you've hissed at them. You're not treating them the way you should." Again, echoing the angel's explanation here about Gentile Christianity having a complicated relationship with its Israelite roots there and not understanding that properly.
Hank Smith:	30:24	Josh, now that you've shown us this, I look at the end of chapter 14:17, and you're saying, "How is this all going to work out? How is he going to bring this back?" This is verse 17. "The work of the father shall commence in fulfilling the covenants which he has made unto his people." All right, I'm ready to know, and then Nephi... that's it. You're going to have to go somewhere else if you want the rest of the story.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	30:51	Well, in chapter 15, Nephi now goes to his brothers and he's going to summarize what he just learned to fill them in on those questions they had. So let's look at that. In verse seven, the brothers say... chapter 15:7, "We cannot understand the words which our father has spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive tree, and also concerning the Gentiles." So we mentioned earlier that Lehi gave a very brief description of the future history, so brief that they're left with questions. Then in verse 12, Nephi begins giving his explanation. "The house of Israel was compared unto an olive tree by the Spirit of the Lord, which was in our Father. And behold, are we not broken off from the house of Israel and are we not a branch of the house of Israel?" This is our story. 13: "and now the thing which our father meaneth concerning the grafting in of the natural branches through the fullness of the Gentiles is..." here's where he is explaining Lehi's sequence.
	31:42	Gentiles get the fullness of the gospel and then Israel gathers. This is what Nephi is saying he's got to explain is the sequence.

In the latter days when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief, yea for the space of many years and many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fullness of the gospel, the Messiah come unto the Gentiles and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed. That's why it's important the Gentiles get it first, because they are going to be the missionaries. They're going to carry the Book of Mormon to Lehi's descendants so that they can have it. It's how missionary work works. Somebody's got to have it first in order to share it with somebody else. You can't gather Israel unless someone's got the gathering tool on them and can go out and do that.

32:26 One thing I should maybe clarify here too, this confuses people, who are these Gentiles? What are we talking about? Well, we're talking about Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery. We're talking about Lucy Mack Smith. We're talking about Mary Fielding. We're talking about these early saints. What gets people confused, they say, "Well, aren't they Israelites? Because the Book of Mormon in 2 Nephi 3 specifically says Joseph Smith is the descendant of Joseph of Egypt. That means he's got Israelite DNA. But the title page of the Book of Mormon says The Book of Mormon comes forth by way of the Gentile. In the book Joseph Smith seems to be called a Gentile there. And he's called both. And the reason is these terms of Israel and Gentile, they're a little bit fluid. They have different definitions and different angles and different contexts. Israelite can mean someone who's strictly a descendant of Abraham, or it can mean anyone who's part of the Covenant.

33:17 Gentile can mean someone who's not a descendant of Abraham, or someone who's not keeping the Covenant. Jesus stresses this more in 3 Nephi. He says at the last days, anyone who's part of the house of Israel but rejects him as being the son of God and the Savior will be cut off from the people who are of the Covenant that are effectively become Gentiles. So these boundaries are a little bit fluid. So Joseph Smith and those early saints, they're in a Gentile culture. They're in a Gentile nation. They don't walk around going, "Oh, my ancestors used to live in Jerusalem." They don't have that sense of heritage from Israel. For practical purposes they're Gentiles, even if they do have Israelite DNA in them. From the Book of Mormon's prophetic perspective here, Nephi is looking ahead at Joseph Smith and there he's like they're basically Gentiles here.

34:03 And they are then going to get the Book of Mormon and take it to our descendants. That's why those terms are a little bit

confusing sometimes, but just allow yourself for a little bit of flexibility there, those fluid boundaries and it'll be okay.

- John Bytheway: 34:14 Yeah, I'm glad you said it that way. Sometimes I'll show my classes when we're talking about gathering of Israel, we'll say, what's a Gentile and just look up the Bible Dictionary definition, and it explains what you just said. I like you said fluid. I've usually said fuzzy. I like fluid better. Because it can change. And when we get our patriarchal blessing, we discover, oh, look at that. I'm one of those tribes. Now I'm part of the House of Israel, and that's why it's so fun to get that and know I'm part of this Abrahamic Covenant, or I've been born in the Covenant and now I'm obligated to try and fulfill this covenant as well.
- Hank Smith: 34:48 Yeah. Josh, I love this. I hope anybody listening who's teaching, I've had lessons on Nephi's vision before and the class ends up fighting about Columbus. It would just be so much better to focus on covenant than Columbus. We've got to restore the covenant. God has not forgotten his promise. It's amazing to me when the Lord makes a promise, thousands of years later he... "I made a promise. I'm keeping this promise."
- John Bytheway: 35:16 And look at what his modern-day prophets are teaching us about. I love that.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 35:21 And let's look at the effect then. Once Lehi's descendants receive the Book of Mormon and is invited back in, starting in verse 14, what happens? "And at that day, shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord. And then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him. Wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved." I want to jump down to verse 18, because I think this is one of the most significant verses in the whole Book of Mormon, and I'm about to make my case for that.
- John Bytheway: 36:02 Okay, what chapter are we in again, Josh?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 36:05 Still Chapter 15:18. We've had this epic story of the Lamanites starting with Lehi being concerned that Laman and Lemuel are making bad choices and they're going to leave the presence of the Lord and that's going to impact his grandkids and his great-grandkids and his great-great-grandkids. That's why the dream has all these people suddenly can't find their way to the tree. There's a mist of darkness and we have to have an iron rod help

us. It's hard now, once those first parents made the decision to leave the covenant path. But we've had this epic story now about how God is going to prepare the Book of Mormon. He's got people ready to go to bring it back in the last days and eventually bring all these Lamanites back into the covenant. Verse 18 says this: "Wherefore our father hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled in the latter days, which covenant the Lord made to our Father, Abraham saying, In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."

37:05 So here's how I interpret this. What Nephi is saying here is giving us permission to see the Lamanites and their story as a type. Lamanites represent all people who leave the covenant path, whether that's other remnants and groups of the House of Israel, or I think even individuals who have left the covenant path. The Lamanite story is in principle teaching us about God and how he relates to those who are in covenant relationship with Him but have left. I hope people don't go, "Why is the Book of Mormon talking so much about this one group? It's great for them, what happens to them, but I'm really concerned about my family and our problems." But I hope we can see that the Lamanites are meant to teach us about your family and your problems, because there's going to be of course, some specific situational differences between what happens to the Lamanites in another group or what happens between a group and an individual.

38:01 But it's the same God working with everybody. It's the same covenant. It's the same gospel plan. There's principles you can learn from how he works with the Lamanites, and that tells us how he works with our children, our parents, our siblings who have left the church, left the covenant path and where we ache over them with the same tender feelings with which Lehi ached over his sons. And that opens up all sorts of possibilities for us here to learn. So for example, as I think about what we just learned about the Lamanites and how God treats the Lamanites, at least three principles come to mind. Number one, God is always willing to forgive when we repent and come unto him. We can't go so far gone or for so long that he's not willing to forgive. When these Lamanites here in the story get the Book of Mormon and they decide to rejoin the covenants and experience all those blessings, they're welcomed home. There's no lingering negative effects. Number two, when people are off the covenant path, God is not simply sitting there twiddling His thumbs, waiting and hoping that they come back. He's actively out there trying to get them back and planning and preparing and doing all that he can do. I mean, the plan that Nephi just

saw in this vision is incredible. God knew thousands of years in advance that things were going to go wrong and he was planning centuries in advance, "I'm going to visit the Nephites. I'm going to teach him these things. I'm going to have to write this stuff down. I'm going to have some Gentile missionaries ready to go later on so they can take this there." He's got everything set up so that when the people are ready themselves to make the decision to repent and come back, He's got all the ducks lined up in a row. Everything is prepared to help them and aid them to come back.

39:51 He's actively pursuing here. A third thing that this suggests to me is how patient God is waiting and helping those to be able to come back into the covenant. I mean, this vision is what about 600 BC? That's like 2,500 years, give or take before this Book of Mormon is going to come with these missionaries back to Lehi's descendants and bring them back in. God was patiently working with these people for more than 2,500 years, and at no point did He go, "You know what, Lamanites? This is just taking way too long. You've been gone way too long. I'm giving up on you. We're done." He never does that. He patiently works with them for as long as it takes until they come back. I'm again reminded of President Nelson.

40:38 I think the Lamanites are a living demonstration of what President Nelson said, "because God has hesed for those who have covenanted with Him, He will love them. He will continue to work with them and offer them opportunities to change. He will forgive them when they repent and should they stray, He will help them find their way back to Him. Because of our covenant with God, He will never tire in his efforts to help us, and we will never exhaust his merciful patience with us." That's the quote. And aren't the Lamanites the perfect example of that? Across thousands of years and after so many efforts, He does manage to get them to come home. And for those of us that have a child, or a sibling, or a spouse or a dear friend who has once been part of the covenant and experienced those blessings and is currently off that path, we all know how painful that is and how much we ache for them and how much we might say in our own way, like Lehi,

41:39 I fear lest you're going to be cast off forever. And this vision is a testament to how much God cares for these people and how actively He is working to entice and pull and tug them home and how much hope we can have that He's patient enough and merciful enough to make this happen. I want to read something from Elder Bednar. It's an important article from the March 2014 ensign called Faithful Parents and Wayward Children. He

quotes a statement from Elder Orson F. Whitney, and then Elder Bednar wants to offer some clarifications because sometimes the quote has been misunderstood. This is based on something Joseph Smith said, although we don't have the Joseph Smith statement.

42:25 So here's Elder Orson F. Whitney from 1929 says, " The eternal sealings of faithful parents and divine promises made to them for valiant service in the cause of truth would not only save themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of divine providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice. They will suffer for their sins. They may tread a thorny path, but if it leads them at last like the penitent prodigal to a loving and forgiving father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children. Hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God."

43:31 So that's Orson F. Whitney. And then Elder Bednar wants to clarify a couple things about that. He said, "Some people have misread this to make as saying that wayward children unconditionally receive the blessings of salvation because of and through the faithfulness of parents." And he says that would be a doctrinal error in and of itself because he quotes lots of scriptures about the importance of agency and each person making the choice to come to Jesus Christ. And that salvation cannot come without repentance. Everyone has to make the choice to repent. There's no automatic, well, I've got a faithful relative, so I'm in there no matter what I do. But Elder Bednar does affirm what an influence righteous parents can have over their posterity.

44:17 He says, "Church leaders agree on the fact," this is quoting Elder Bednar that, "parents who honor temple covenants are in a position to exert great spiritual influence over time on their children. Faithful members of the church can find comfort in knowing that they can lay claim to the promises of divine guidance and power through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the privileges of the priesthood in their efforts to help family members receive the blessings of salvation and exaltation." He continues, "The tentacles of divine providence described by Elder Whitney may be considered a type of spiritual power, a heavenly pull or tug that entices a wandering

Dr. Joshua Sears:	45:00	child to return to the fold eventually. Such an influence cannot override the moral agency of a child, but nonetheless can invite and beckon. Ultimately, a child must exercise his or her moral agency and respond in faith, repent with full purpose of heart and act in accordance with the teachings of Christ." And then he closes the whole thing by encouraging parents who are struggling over this to say, "the best thing you can do is to love them, continue to be family to them, and be an example of the gospel of Jesus Christ to them.
	45:33	"As parents are patient and persistent in loving their children and in becoming living examples of disciples of Jesus Christ, they most effectively teach the father's plan of happiness. The steadfastness of such parents bears powerful witness of the redeeming and strengthening powers of the Savior's Atonement and invites wayward children to see with new eyes and to hear with new ears. Acting in accordance with the teachings of the Savior invites spiritual power into our lives. Power to hear and heed, power to discern and power to persevere. Devoted discipleship is the best and only answer to every question and challenge."
	46:14	I think that is right in line with the overall message of The Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is very clear again and again that we must repent and that choosing not to follow God is a real option and there are real consequences for that. We see Lehi and others aching over their children and grandchildren who are not on the right path. But I think The Book of Mormon is overall very hopeful about people's prospects, outlining what an amazing God we have who has bound himself to us by covenants and is not going to give up on people. On the title page of The Book of Mormon, Moroni could have said one of the basic messages here is you got to repent or you're not going to make it.
	46:58	But instead he chose a hopeful note. "The Book of Mormon is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers, that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever." They are not. So we see this fear expressed in the Psalms, am I cast off forever? Is this going to last? And The Book of Mormon's message is there's always hope. We have to respect agency. Everyone's going to have to make that choice to repent in this life or the next, but we have a God who's dedicated to helping all his kids get home. He wants us to be in covenant relationship with him.

- 47:37 So I think we can see the Lamanites as a people across generations of time as being a spiritual, a metaphor for the individual journey of even one wayward child. The Book of Mormon doesn't deal a lot with missionary work in the afterlife, but when you add the Doctrine and Covenants and the spirit world and our understanding that there are some opportunities to repent there even if it's a little harder and that we have chances to learn and grow beyond the confines and mortality there, we can get a sense that even with individuals, God is patient and he's going to do everything he can to pull and tug and invite, try desperately to get those kids home.
- 48:13 So it does hurt when family members leave the covenant path and it is hard and we should pray over them and I think it's okay to shed some tears over them, but I think The Book of Mormon is encouraging us ultimately to put our trust in God, to know that he is trying even harder than we are to get them home and that we have every reason to be hopeful and optimistic as Heavenly Father beckons and plans and works hard to get people to come back to him because he wants them to have that relationship with him in his presence, enjoying all the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant.
- Hank Smith: 48:48 Josh, this has been absolutely wonderful, as you were speaking here in the last few minutes, I thought of John chapter 11 where Jesus comes to Lazarus' tomb. He's been gone for four days and it seems that he's far beyond the reach of the Lord. He's been gone for too long. I think it might be fun to tie that to what you are saying, that we weep and mourn over this person we think is too far gone. Then the Lord opens the tomb and calls Lazarus out of the tomb and the shock of that moment. Can you imagine?
- 49:27 I think that could be similar to our situations where we think, "Oh, they're too far gone. I will never get them back," this wayward child or this wayward grandchild or sibling or old mission companion, "They'll never come back." And the message to me of John 11 combined with your message is, oh no, they are not too far gone for him. I've referenced this quote from Joseph Smith a few times, but I think it's worth repeating. He talks about The Great Jehovah. He says, "He knows the situation of both the living and the dead," I think that's everyone, living and dead. "He knows the situation of both the living and the dead and has made ample provision for their redemption."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 50:09 Yeah, and if I can add to that a quote from President Uchtdorf, O How Great the Plan of our God, from the October, 2016

General Conference. He says what's going to happen at final judgment will "all will eventually be saved and inherit a kingdom of glory. Those who trust in God and seek to follow his laws and ordinances will inherit lives in the eternities that are unimaginable in glory and overwhelming in majesty. That day of judgment will be a day of mercy and love, a day when broken hearts are healed, when tears of grief are replaced with tears of gratitude, when all will be made right. Yes, there will be deep sorrow because of sin. There will be regrets and even anguish because of our mistakes, our foolishness and our stubbornness that caused us to miss opportunities. But I have confidence that we will not only be satisfied with the judgment of God, we will also be astonished and overwhelmed by his infinite grace, mercy, generosity and love for us, his children." That's not how we usually think of final judgment, but ever since I heard that, I thought of it differently.

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| John Bytheway: | 51:22 | I can't remember if one of us used this phrase today or if it's just been in my mind, but just this idea that God has the long view, that we are seeing a finite period of life and we talk about the afterlife, but God sees all of it and he's got that ample provision I think again of this is my work and my glory. I am mighty to save. And we're trying to make sense of it, but he's got this and he's got the long view. So this has been really, really great today. I hope it's going to help a lot of people feel some more hope that God's got this. He's got you, he's got your kids, he's got the long view and he knows exactly how to do his work. |
| Hank Smith: | 52:03 | Yeah. John, I was talking to a friend once and she said, "How do I get my children to return to the path?" And I said, "Well, first you are not going to get your children to return to the path, he is going to get his children to return to the path." I said, "Remember, this is like a surgery and the Lord is the surgeon and you're the assistant. Do what he asks you to do and let him do his work, but don't jump in and say, 'Let's switch places. I'll be the surgeon. You be the assistant.' That surgery is not going to go well. Assist him in saving souls instead of saying, 'Hey, Lord, can you assist me in saving these souls?' Take that assistant role." |
| John Bytheway: | 52:51 | You just remember in Doctrine and Covenants here, that beautiful little insight in section 46 verse 15, it's talking about spiritual gifts, but then it says that, "The Lord will suit his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men," and the great and spacious building is bigger and louder, and now it has social media. Those conditions are taken into account. That's nice to know. That's faith building to know that. |

Dr. Joshua Sears:	53:15	Yeah. My grandfather, Warren Sears, was a World War II veteran and he was a doctor, had a great family, but the last few years of his life he had Alzheimer's and had no clue who he was or who any of us were. That led sometimes to some inappropriate behavior, flirting with nurses, leaving the house and being a flight risk. But what I remember is that for my dad and my aunt and my uncle and those that were caring for him, no one blamed him for those things. We all knew that if he really understood who he was, he'd be acting differently. So we took that into account and we're very patient and quick to forgive when he would act inappropriately, and I think all of us have some spiritual Alzheimer's here.
	53:55	We would all act better if we understood better who we are. And mortality is hard, and the flesh has its pulls and there's distractions in the noise of the great and spacious building, and the Lord takes that into account I think, and that accounts for why he's so merciful. He knows it's rough down here and he takes that into account and is very patient and merciful.
Hank Smith:	54:13	Wow. Josh, this has been eye-opening and insightful and wonderful. We would love to keep you all day and go verse by verse and see this. Before we let you go, I know you love the Book of Mormon. You're a Bible scholar, but I know you love the Book of Mormon. We've been friends for a while and you talk about it often. Can you leave our guests with why that is? Why do you love this book so much?
Dr. Joshua Sears:	54:40	I guess I can't imagine any aspect of the relationship I have with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ that's been meaningful in my life, that hasn't been just shaped by years of reading in the Book of Mormon over and over again. I've spent a lot of time studying the Bible in the last few years for professional things, but it's not like I knew all that much going on my mission. Going on my mission, it was the Book of Mormon that inspired me to go out there. It was the Book of Mormon I was sharing with people and the Book of Mormon that I watched changed people's lives.
	55:10	I've just experienced over and over that the Book of Mormon has such incredible power to bring us to Jesus Christ. What we saw today in first Nephi 13 helps explain a little bit of background about why that is, and I love the fact that it's so carefully prepared by God to do what it's supposed to do. In the Bible, things came together slowly over centuries and centuries, and we don't know who wrote half the books, and for what the impact it can have, the Bible has been amazing, but the Book of Mormon just seems like it's got this extra level of God saying, "There's going to be a lot of calamities in the latter days, and

there's going to be a lot of trouble, a lot of tears. I need something that's very custom designed to help people with their challenges."

55:51 The Book of Mormon is what I keep turning to, to help me understand the Old and New Testaments, and it's what gives the Doctrine and Covenants purpose and meaning, and it's not just this history that's there. It's this message like we've been talking about today, that God is faithful. God will not abandon us. He's going to make sure that He's prepared every means necessary if we're to overcome every challenge the world can throw at us. And I'll just finish with Nephi here. Nephi into chapter 15 invites us to, "Partake from the Tree of Life whose fruit is most precious and most desirable above all other fruits, yea, and it is the greatest of all the gifts of God." So every time I go to The Book of Mormon, it just reminds me of how much I want to feast on that fruit and stay in God's presence forever because there really is nothing sweeter.

Hank Smith: 56:38 Josh, thank you for your time. Thank you for your goodness. I've been around you in our employment and you're just good to the core. Thank you for just being so brilliant and showing us things that we haven't seen. What a blessing you are. So thank you, Josh.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 56:54 Well, when we're talking about the Book of Mormon, it's hard to have a bad discussion, so just give it credit there.

Hank Smith: 57:01 We'll finish where we started. No one that brilliant should be that humble, but he is. We want to thank Dr. Josh Sears for being with us today. What a treat. We want to thank of course, 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 continuing in first Nephi on FollowHIM.

57:27 Today's transcripts, show notes, and additional references are available on our website, FollowHim.co. That's FollowHim.co. You can watch the podcast on YouTube with additional videos on our Facebook and Instagram accounts. All of this is absolutely free and we'd love for you to share it with your family and friends. We'd like to reach more of those who are searching for help with their Come, Follow Me study. If you could subscribe to, rate, review, and comment on the podcast, that will make us easier to find. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra and Annabelle Sorensen.

President Russell M. Nelson: 58:06

Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to him. Follow him.

THE FROTHY BEER



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| Hank Smith: | 00:02 | Hello everyone. Welcome to FollowHIM Favorites. We're doing a single story out of each week's lesson this year. John, we're in 1st Nephi 14 today, and I want to show you a verse, verse 12, and I'm going to tell you a story. Nephi says, "I see the Church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few." It's an interesting point right there where you want him to say its numbers were great- |
| John Bytheway: | 00:28 | Huge. And huge. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:29 | Yeah. He says its numbers were few. It reminds me of Jacob 5, he called the servants and they were- |
| John Bytheway: | 00:36 | Few. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:37 | You're hoping for a different word. I thought about this word and I want to share with you a story and maybe bring out this idea of it's okay to be one of the few. Here's the story, John. I have a friend named Phil, Phil Reschke, who told me a story about his brother Dave. They were living in Colorado where Phil said Dave, his older brother, was really popular and a student body officer and really loved by the high school. And Phil was a sophomore, a younger one, kind of the one that's in the background sometimes. He said it was after a football game where everybody went to this big pizza place and standing room only everybody in the high school kind of floods this pizza joint after a game. |
| | 01:21 | Phil said at one point a cheerleader had said, "Hey everyone, everyone listen to me." And so the place got quiet and everyone's looking up at this girl and she said, "Everyone, it's Dave Reschke's 18th birthday today. We want to celebrate. He's an adult." Or something like that. And at that time, I don't know the laws, John, but you could drink alcohol when you turn 18. One of the servers brings out a huge frosty mug of beer and everybody's watching and they sing happy birthday. And right at the end of the song, they hand this mug of beer to Dave, and |

Phil is sitting at a booth a ways away and he's just watching knowing that he and his brother are the only members of the church in this restaurant. And he's watching him. And he said, "My brother stood up and held this mug up really high with a big smile on his face." And Phil, for a second thought, oh no-

John Bytheway: 02:16

Is he going to drink it?

Hank Smith: 02:18

Is he going to drink this? And he said, my brother with such confidence stood up and said, you guys, thank you so much for remembering my birthday. He said, you know, I love you and you know that I love this school and everybody's cheering, woo. And he said, but you know me better than that. And he sat it down on the table and went back to what he was doing. Went back to chatting, and having a great time. And Phil told me, he said, "I was sitting in that booth going, I know now who I want to be." Phil told me on the way home, he asked his brother, he said, "Dave, I thought you were going to drink that for a second." And he said, Dave got after him. And he said-

John Bytheway: 02:59

I thought you knew me better than that too.

Hank Smith: 03:00

Yeah. He said, Phil, I didn't make that decision tonight. You need to make decisions long before those moments come. When I read that verse, I saw the saints and their numbers were few. We encourage all of our listeners, you might be alone, but you'll be okay. You're not truly alone.

John Bytheway: 03:20

It reminds me of the Old Testament story, they that be with us are more than they that be with them. You can't see them, but we're okay.

Hank Smith: 03:27

But they're there. Beautiful. Join us next week. We'll be back for another FollowHIM Favorites stories.