



- John Bytheway: 00:00:07 Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of Follow Him. We are here today with Ross Baron. This year in Old Testament, they have added these lessons called “Things (Thoughts) to Keep in Mind”. We had Ross before, talking about background of reading the Old Testament. Today, we're going to talk about the covenant. Hank, when you think of the Covenant, and I know you do, what do you think of?
- Hank Smith: 00:00:33 I'll teach this in my classes to my college students. Sometimes, you know, students complain, "When am I ever gonna use this?" I'm like, "Well, I guess if you don't wanna know why you came to Earth, you just don't need to know. When am I ever gonna use this? Every day. Every day you're gonna use this. It's gonna impact every decision that you make, every important decision you make. This covenant is that crucial."
- John Bytheway: 00:00:58 Yeah, it's who you are. It's part of who you are. And if our audience wants to learn more about it from a really dynamic guy, I saw this video at the Ensign College. He did a whole devotional about this. What would you do, Hank? Go to Ensign.edu, Ensigncollege.edu?
- Hank Smith: 00:01:15 I think the easiest is if you go to YouTube, go to Ensign College Devotionals, Hank Smith. This was the main point of what I wanted to do that day. Thanks for bringing it up, John.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:26 It was superb. I need to watch it again and again because you had a ton of information in there. Some really nice little rememberable sentences about the covenant. Over the years, it's getting better. We're talking about it a little bit more. We brought and our audience is acquainted with Dr. Ross Baron, who was at BYU Idaho. He's down at BYU Provo now. He is a professor of ancient scripture. Ross, when you think of the covenant, I mean, you gave us such a great overview for reading

the Old Testament. Give us a few sentences about what covenant are we talking about? What are we doing?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:02:02 I'm so with both of you on this. The new and everlasting covenant. President Nelson gave, I think, honestly, one of the most amazing Liahona, October 2022, entitled "The Everlasting Covenant", where he says that the new and everlasting covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant are essentially the same thing. When we talk about the covenants, like Hank said to his college students, this is every day. This is all day. This is your life. It is one of the most important things to understand. I think sometimes we overcomplicate it. Today, I hope we get into this great scripture, prophetic discussion where we talk about what it is and what's the relevance for us. What is the Abrahamic Covenant and why is it important to me? Those are the two things we're gonna hone in on today.

John Bytheway: 00:02:50 I remember sitting in the back of our chapel watching a priesthood session of conference and Elder Bednar talking about going on a mission is something you do, but becoming a missionary--. He even talked about the reason you get a patriarchal blessing is to remind you you're Abraham's seed, and this is part of who you are to fulfill this covenant. For me, it was a, "Yeah, I get it. It's not what you do. It's who you are." Let me read the first paragraph in the Thoughts to Keep in Mind from the Come Follow Me manual, this is what it says, "Throughout the Old Testament, you will frequently read the word covenant. Today we usually think of covenants as sacred promises with God, but in the ancient world, covenants were also an important part of people's interactions with each other. For their safety and survival, people needed to be able to trust each other, and covenants were a way to secure that trust."

00:03:48 "So when God spoke to Enoch, Noah, Moses, and others about covenants, He was inviting them to enter into a", here's the word, "relationship of trust with Him. We call this covenant the new and everlasting covenant, or the Abrahamic covenant--a reference to the covenant God made with Abraham and Sarah, and then renewed with their descendants, Isaac and Jacob (also called Israel)." Sometimes we say, "Oh, a covenant's a two-way agreement", but that can sound like a contract, that I sign it, you sign it, we stick it on the shelf. This is a relationship, and that changes it so much. I'm just excited, Ross, to have you take over. And those two questions, what is the Abrahamic Covenant? What does it mean to me?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:04:33 Let's zoom out a little bit. We talk about the Abrahamic Covenant, but we should really understand, like the manual

said, and John, like you were saying, the covenant or the everlasting covenant, and now we call it the new and everlasting covenant. We'll talk about why. The idea is the covenant didn't start with Abraham. We say Abraham a covenant. This is from the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith page 190. Quote, "Everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth and relates to their dispensation of things how they dispense to men." These personages are God, the Redeemer, and the witness or the testator. The idea of covenant and covenant relationship doesn't start with Abraham. I think we're missing the point. We'll talk about why Abraham in a minute, but the idea is it started in pre-mortality. Then the whole idea of the plan, the whole idea of God presenting a plan in a council becomes a covenant.

00:05:34 Well, what's the covenant? The covenant ultimately is that we are not stranded. We sustain this plan where we're gonna come to earth and we're gonna get bodies, but there's gonna be a veil dropped. We all know that's gonna be bad unless there's some redemption made. The covenant or the promise of the Father is, I will not leave you stranded. You will not be stranded. I'm going to send Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the center of the everlasting covenant, the center of the Abrahamic covenant. And it is because of that covenant, then back to the idea of relation, our relation gets ordered properly to God. God said in pre-mortality, I'm not leaving you stranded. I covenant. I'm gonna send my son. Revelation chapter five, when he unlooses the seals and we all shout honor and glory to God because Jesus is gonna be able to carry out and fulfill all the terms and conditions of the Father's plan.

00:06:28 Now, the word covenant isn't specifically said in the book of Moses and Abraham with respect to it, but we know from Moses chapter six, Adam enters into the doctrine of Christ. Adam gets baptized. Adam repents. Adam receives the Spirit. Adam is on what President Nelson would say is the covenant path. Then Enoch, Enoch's gonna have a covenant and what's critical about Enoch, Enoch gets a promise and then he gets a sign. Noah gets the promise and a sign. It's reconfirmed with Noah. And in fact, the first time the word covenant shows up in the Old Testament in the Hebrew Bible is Genesis chapter six, verse 18, where he says to Noah, I'm gonna establish my covenant with you. And then in chapter nine, he goes more detail in terms of what the promise is and then what the signs are. Again, we're talking about specifically the Abrahamic Covenant, but I wanna make sure we understand the new and everlasting covenant has been going on since pre-mortality.

- 00:07:26 And in fact, one way we might say it is, it's the Father's plan. It's the plan of happiness. It's the plan of redemption. It is God's plan. I love Romans where Paul says, the gospel of God concerning his son, Jesus Christ. And declared to be the son of God by the resurrection. Romans 1: 1-4. I paraphrase some of it. It's the gospel of God concerning his son, Jesus Christ. That's the covenant. I just like to throw that in, that this idea of the covenant in pre-mortality, the covenant with Adam, the covenant with Enoch, the covenant with Noah, and then we get a period of apostasy and we get a covenant with Abraham.
- John Bytheway: 00:08:05 When you're reading the Pearl of Great Price, and Abraham just says these amazing words like, "You know, I was a follower of righteousness, but I want it to be a greater follower of righteousness." I wanted the blessings of the fathers, and you're like, wait a minute. The fathers, you're the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but you're saying that the Abrahamic Covenant was before Abraham. We just name it after him because he modeled it so well.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:08:28 He did model it, so that's a really good way to put it. And I have students who get a little confused because we talk about the Abrahamic Covenant. They've literally asked me, "So there was no covenant before Abraham?" No, no, no, no. That's why I'm making this point. I'm suggesting it just wasn't his father's. It goes into pre-mortality. And again, every single covenant, whether it's pre-mortality, Adam, Enoch or Noah, Jesus Christ is at the center of all of those covenants. No question about it.
- John Bytheway: 00:08:57 Do you think that we could draw a similarity between the Melchizedek priesthood? We call it Melchizedek priesthood because he was such a great high priest, but the real name goes further back than Melchizedek, the ... Is it 107, the Holy Priesthood after the order of the Son of God?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:09:16 Yeah, after the order of the Son of God, living after that order. And think about this, Melchizedek is the conjunction I think both of you know, and many of our listeners know, of two words, Melek and Zedek. Melek means king, and Zedek means righteous. A Melek Zedek is a righteous king. The most newly ordained elder in the church is actually being ordained to become a Melek Zedek a righteous king. And women that go to the temple are being, if you will, ordained to become Malka Zedeka are becoming righteous queens. The idea is kings and priests, queens, and priestesses. So, Melchizedek is pointing to the righteous king, which is Jesus Christ.

Hank Smith: 00:10:00 Ross, I really like when we keep things simple. When we overcomplicate it, people start to check out. What if we were to say something like this, that because He loves everyone, He chooses certain people to bless everyone. That's a common question. Well, if God loves everyone, why does he have a chosen people? It's because he loves everyone, that he has a chosen people. These people are under covenant to bless everyone. What if we explained it really simply? The Abrahamic Covenant that didn't start with Abraham is a group of people that are going to get unique commandments, unique revelation. If they live those commandments in revelation, they are going to get blessings, blessings that the other children on the earth don't have, but with those blessings, they are to bless everyone else.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:10:51 Right on. God chooses Abraham because Abraham, 1 Nephi 17:40, God loves those who want him to be their God. He loves those people. Abraham was a follower after righteousness. You brought up Abraham chapter one, where Abraham wants to be a follower after righteousness. Abraham gets chosen and he gets certain promises as a result of his desire to serve God. He gets certain blessings and promises. We can say it a variety of ways. I'm gonna say he's gonna get the priesthood in the ministry, the responsibility then to carry out that priesthood. He's gonna get a land promise. He's gonna get the gospel, including celestial marriage. Again, you could say that in different ways. I've heard people say the three Ps and different things. They're all the same, essentially. He's getting certain blessings. We don't often say with those blessings come corresponding obligations or responsibilities.

00:11:46 The way I wanna frame it, Abraham probably wouldn't have understood it this way. I wanna be careful. So Abraham gets certain blessings, right? Again, however you wanna say it, posterity and the gospel, the priesthood, celestial marriage, promised lands, but then he gets corresponding obligations. I'm gonna categorize the obligations as the following: living the gospel of Jesus Christ, taking care of those in need, inviting all to come unto Christ, and uniting families for eternity. What I just did there was obviously the church's mission. Again, I wanna be careful. I don't wanna overlay 2026 church's mission on 1800 BC, on Abraham. Essentially, if you carefully read the scriptures, that is Abraham's obligation, which Abraham carries out. Okay, now here's the deal. If you stop doing those things, you lose the blessings. Boom, you just understood the Old Testament. What happens? I don't live the gospel. I don't care for those in need.

00:12:55 I'm not inviting other people to come unto Christ. I'm not being married for time and all eternity. I'm not entering into covenant. What happens? I'm gonna lose my land. I'm gonna lose the priesthood or get a lesser priesthood. I'm not gonna have the fullness of the gospel. Those things will be taken away. And if there's complete apostasy, then it will be completely taken away. Boom, you just got the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Book of Mormon. Right there. You get certain blessings. Corresponding to those blessings are certain obligations. Then if you do those obligations those blessings stay full force in effect. Now, one other thing. Let's say I am living at the time of Abraham and I am like, "You know what? Man, I heard Abraham got these blessings. I want those blessings." What do I have to do? Ultimately, you have to go to Abraham or one of his assigned delegates to receive that blessing.

00:13:53 I can't get the blessing independent of Abraham. While Abraham's on earth, if I want those blessings, I go to Abraham. Whether I'm the literal seed of Abraham or I'm outside, I have to then submit and receive the ordinances at the hands of the authorized servants. Then I become an inheritor of the blessings and the responsibilities. In terms of the latter days, April 3rd, 1836, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Kirtland Temple, Moses, Elias, Elijah, come. Essentially, all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are now given to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. They become the authorized messengers to dispense all of the blessings and corresponding responsibilities of the Abrahamic Covenant. So, in the latter days, if I want those blessings, who do I go to? I gotta go to Joseph Smith or his authorized delegates. If I'm in some little town in Argentina like Tres Arroyos, where I served, and somebody wants those blessings, who do they go to?

00:14:52 Like President Nelson said when he was in the Twelve, ask the missionaries. That's where you go. I'm presumptive enough to say this. I'm presumptive enough to say this. If an angel appears to somebody who's not a Latter-day Saint, and I believe that could happen, I'm presumptive to say, "I know what that angel will say." That angel will say, "Go ask the missionaries." Because the angel will not go around authorized messengers. The angel will not go around his authorized servants. I want Abraham's blessings. I gotta humble myself, and I have to go to his authorized servants, and then receive, whether I'm literal seed or not, once I enter into the covenant path, I then become adopted or literal, now activating my descendancy from Abraham, and I become an heir to those blessings. But I gotta

do the corresponding obligations. And then those blessings are in full force and effect in my life.

00:15:51 Acts chapter nine, right? When Jesus shows up to Saul, he says, "What would you have me do? You go to find my servant who's in this city, he's gonna tell you what to do. " Even Jesus doesn't go around authorized servants while they're on earth, except to point them to those authorized servants. When Jesus comes to the Nephites, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ whom the prophets testified shall come into the world." He first proclaims who he is and then secondarily, he then upholds his authorized servants, because that is the divine pattern.

John Bytheway: 00:16:23 Oh, thanks for pointing that out. I also think how wonderful it was that when Jesus came in Third Nephi, he's like, I want you to have the words of my servant Malachi. I mean, he could have said, "Well, I gave it to him, so I'll just tell you." But what a wonderful thing to honor his own servant, in a way, and say, "You need to have the words of Malachi."

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:16:43 Well, even in Third Nephi 23, he says, bring me the text. Hey, I commanded my servant Samuel to prophesy certain things. Did you write that down, Nephi? Oops. I need that written down, but He bolsters Samuel. My point is, when you have authorized servants on earth, and if you want the blessings of Abraham, which I think all should want, and you should want the corresponding obligations because nothing will bless your life more than living the gospel of Jesus Christ, taking care of those in need, inviting all to come into Christ, and uniting family's eternity. Nothing will bless your life more. Nothing will bring more light to your life. Nothing will bring more power to your life. And by the way, I always like to say, if somebody's feeling, you know, like I'm a little off, I always like to go back to those four things. Is your life aligned with those four things?

00:17:30 And if it's not, that's gonna be a problem. Because that is the new and everlasting gospel. That's the Abrahamic Covenant. This is a huge blessing.

Hank Smith: 00:17:39 It is. Elder Bednar said, we were born into mortality to fulfill the covenant and promise God made to Abraham. I mean, it's not like-

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:17:48 Exactly.

Hank Smith: 00:17:49 ... it's one of our reasons for coming here. It is THE reason for coming.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:17:54 The other deal is this, it's like some people are like, John, you were talking about we're the chosen people ... It begs the question, chosen for what? Chosen to sit in a throne and have people fan me and feed me grapes? No. Chosen to wear out my life so that I have people on my shoulders as I bring them back to Jesus Christ, as I bring myself back to Jesus Christ. That is the Abrahamic Covenant. That is our joy and that's what we shouted for joy about coming to mortality, that I would have this opportunity so that I can enter into celestial marriage. I can have the priesthood. I can have the ministry. By the way, let's talk about the land promise for just a second. For our students and for most people today, at least in the United States, I know there's other parts of the world this is not true.

00:18:39 The idea of permanence is a weird thing. For the most of human history, the idea that you could build a house and keep it there, the idea that you could plant a vineyard and then reap the fruits of that vineyard, super rare. During Doctrine and Covenants, you guys had Dr. Dirkmaat on. He talked about Missouri. We didn't have permanence. We owned the land and had title to the land and they kicked us off. This idea of a land thing isn't necessarily specifically saying, "Oh, this one place," although there's that as well. But I think really what it's saying is, if you live in Bahia Blanca, Argentina, you're gonna get a temple, we're gonna be able to build a temple and there's gonna be permanence there. If you guys will keep your covenants, if you keep your corresponding obligations, that temple will be protected and you'll be able to do ordinances there.

00:19:33 If you live in Tokyo, Japan, and you keep your covenants, that temple will be protected. That makes sense? In other words, the land promise has to do more, I believe, with a permanence and a capacity to leaven that area, more than it has to do with, say, the boundaries of the Holy Land. I think that's part of it, and I think a more expanded concept would be Jesus' blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Ultimately, the earth becomes the holy mountain spoken of by Isaiah and Jeremiah, where it is the land inheritance all of us will eventually get.

John Bytheway: 00:20:09 Wow. This is great. Hank, I want you to go back to that because I've heard you talk about this and I love it because sometimes, Hank, you said, if you ask your students, why do we come to Earth to get a body- ... To be tested? Go back and say it again the way you said it.

Hank Smith: 00:20:26 You're the typical, wonderful, primary age child. Why did you come to Earth? It's to get a body, to be tested, to have a family, to become like Heavenly Father. Very age-appropriate answers.

Elder Bednar said, "We were foreordained in the premortal existence and born into mortality to fulfill the covenant and promise God made to Abraham...That is who we are...that is why we are here-- today and always." I actually taught my little twin boys this little phrase, and I said, if your primary teacher ever says, why did we come to earth? You both are to say, in unison, we're here to fulfill the covenant and promise God made to Abraham, ma'am. That is who we are, and that is why we are here.

John Bytheway: 00:21:17

That's right.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:21:18

Now, in terms of the corresponding obligations, it's interesting that the Lord tells Joseph in Section 132, Go and do the works of Abraham. So, what's fascinating to do, we pick up Abraham at the end of chapter 11 of Genesis, you go all the way through and then, like, Genesis 24, and then 25, like, that's kind of where it ends. And if you go through, you can track him living the gospel, taking care of those in need, inviting all to come into Christ, and entering into uniting families for eternity. Like, you can literally track it. If you don't mind, I just thought we could go through a couple of those things. Is that okay? Living the gospel. So, D&C 1:32: 29, quote, the Lord says, "Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord." Wow. I mean, this is a great guy.

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Genesis 18:19, this is what the Lord says about him. "For I know him." This is God talking about Abraham. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." Man, that could be said of us, by the way. Book of Mormon language, he's a true follower of Jesus Christ. He is living the gospel. That's number one. Number two, caring for those in need. Genesis 18, we've got these three messengers that show up. Some of us have been to the Holy Land. The idea in the Holy Land of hospitality is absolutely huge and how you take care of strangers. So, these three holy men or three messengers show up. What does Abraham do? He is going out of his way to be hospitable to take care of them.

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He wants to make sure that they are okay. The end of chapter 18, you find him caring about the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. This whole interchange between him and God about, well, what if there's 50 righteous in that place? Like, you're gonna spare them, right? This love, this care for of his brothers and sisters, people that have might have actually been wicked to him, but he's still concerned about them. His nephew

in Genesis 14, Lot gets carried away captive. What does Abraham do? Man, he marshals his whole house. They go up and they rescue his nephew. He is gonna care for those in need. Hugh Nibley tells this apocryphal story that some of you might have heard where Abraham is in the tent at the heat of the day and it's just roasting. It's so hot. Eliezer is his servant and he says, Eliezar, I need you to go out. There might be somebody out there.

00:24:02 There might be somebody who needs us, who's out in the desert. And Eliezer goes out and comes back. I haven't thought him. Go again, go again. This idea that Abraham, like Mosiah 28, like the sons of Mosiah, we can't even bear the thought that somebody might be hurt or in need and we could somehow help them. Number two, he cares for those in need. All right, number three, he's inviting all to come unto Christ. In Abraham chapter 2:15, "And I took Sarai, whom I took to wife when I was an Ur, in Chaldea, and Lot, my brother's son..." and then this: "...and all our substance that we had gathered, and the souls that we had won in Haran, and came forth to the land of Canaan, and dwelt in tents as we came on our way". The souls that we had won.

00:24:51 He had been out preaching Christ and him crucified. He had been inviting other people to come unto Christ. Finally, Uniting Families. He is about a covenant relationship with Sarai. He marries Sarai. Then they both get new names. He's family centered, family oriented. It starts him keeping all of those absolutely incredible obligations.

John Bytheway: 00:25:18 Live, care, invite, unite. I love how succinct that is and easy to remember those action words. Live, care, invite, unite, and then what you've done, live the gospel of Jesus Christ, care for those in need. Invite all to come unto Christ and unite families for eternity. What you just did, you ran us through how Abraham did all of those.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:25:39 Yeah. If we're back to, what is it? The Abrahamic Covenant consists of certain particular blessings of what we've talked about, and then corresponding obligations that we've talked about. Why is it relevant? Because the reason I'm here, Elder Bednar quote, is to actually carry out this Abrahamic Covenant. To bless the world, to take part in the Father's plan. The idea is that God is working via covenant, both with the House of Israel, but also with individuals, as we then carry out that work. What the covenant does is it orients me properly to God and my neighbor. Again, Jesus, what are the two great commandments? Matthew 22. Love God, love your neighbor. Well, how do I do

that? Via the covenant. Via the covenant. If you're living the Abrahamic Covenant, think about what that does. That will actually orient me properly in terms of loving God and loving my neighbor as myself.

00:26:36 That's what that does. That's so powerful. So that filter, love God, love your neighbor, can now take place via the Abrahamic Covenant. That's why it's so exciting. That's why it's amazing. And that's why we should be on fire about it.

John Bytheway: 00:26:49 To say that we're gonna bless all the families of the earth, one of the articulations of the covenant, what is the greatest blessing we can offer? It's a temple. It's the new and everlasting. It's get families bound together.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:27:02 That's right. And so what does Joseph say? What is the object of the gathering? Like, why do we gather? He says, it's to build a temple. What does that do? It circles me back to the Abrahamic Covenant. The moment I get baptized, I enter into, in terms of kind of a preliminary way, the Abrahamic Covenant. But when I am sealed for time and all eternity, all the blessings of Abraham, and Isaac, Jacob are poured out upon my head so that I am promised thrones, exaltations, dominions, principalities, powers. Section 132. All of that gets placed upon my head so that I am a full inheritor of those blessings as I keep the corresponding obligation. Who's the guarantor of the covenant? The Lord, Jesus Christ. By the way, messenger of the covenant is Malachi. Mal'akhi, my messenger.

John Bytheway: 00:27:52 Oh, how cool is that? I love hearing you speak Hebrew.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:27:55 You gotta do a lot of "haking" when you speak Hebrew. Malach is the idea of a messenger. Malachi is the, the end, the suffix, i- the E part is my. So, Malachi is my messenger.

Hank Smith: 00:28:10 Ross, when I was younger, I remember being taught, at least this is what I picked up on, was that the restoration is a restoration of Christ's church. That Christ had established a church, it had fallen into apostasy, there was no priesthood on the earth, we're gonna bring it back. Since that time, personally, if I were to teach this to my younger self, I would say it's much further back than that. Christianity itself continues on through the converted Gentiles. It's the covenant that's lost, that no one's talking about. The children of Israel or the Israel, the house of Israel, you might call them, have no idea who they are, what they're supposed to do. There's no temple to gather too. Because it seems to me when Moroni appears, he's not talking

about, "Hey, we're gonna bring back the New Testament church." He seems to be quoting Isaiah and Malachi.

00:29:02 Joseph Smith says he quotes to me Isaiah 11, which is, God's gonna gather from east and west the dispersed of Judah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:29:10 That's right. And so, fact, he quotes Isaiah 11 and says, "It's soon to be fulfilled." This goes back to my point about authorized messengers. If I'm living in 1815, say, and I'm good Christians, good Christian people, but I want all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I can't get it. It's not available. I could be having the influence of the Holy Ghost, like the light of Christ is in my life, I'm following, I'm reading the Bible, but I don't get the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Not fully, not yet. Even the ongoing restoration, those things start to happen. Those things start to come line upon line, precept on precept as the fullness of that knowledge and those keys are dispensed in the latter days. It's so powerful. So, I love that. I love that, what you said. Let me say one other thing too, I try to create an analogy, like, I was once asked in a very serious way, why do we have to be in a covenant?

00:30:08 What's the purpose? Can't we just say, I love God, I love my neighbor? Like, what's the deal? The analogy over time that I've come to is this idea of my relationship with my wife. I think the marriage covenant is meant to teach me about and mirror the new and everlasting covenant. Let me explain why. I ask students like, "What's different between me and my wife and other women?" And they'll be like, "Oh, you love her. Like you love her." I was like, "Yeah, I love my wife, but I love like my mom and I love my sister." And like, yeah, that's great. But you think she's the best? Uh, yeah, no, I think she's the best. That's true. I was like, we go through this thing. But ultimately, what separates Kathleen from every other woman and every other person on earth is the covenant I've made with her and with God.

00:31:02 I came up with seven things. I wanted to just say these seven things and then I wanna do an analogy of ... So, number one, Kathleen is the most important person in the world for me. She's the only person, by the way, besides the Lord, that I'm to love with all my heart. Section 42 verse 22. Except for the Lord. I love my wife with all my heart. I'm commanded to love the Lord with all my heart. Isn't that interesting? Okay, number two. The complimentary nature of the husband/wife relationship in a covenant is transformative for both of us. I become a better person, she becomes a better person because of that union. Number three, our sealing covenant creates an everlasting tie.

It's not casual. It's not like your relationship with some young lady in your class or somebody in the ward that you minister to.

00:31:56 It's awesome, but it's not the same. Number four, she is the only person I am to cleave to and none else. Also, D&C 42:22, Genesis chapter two, verse 24. She is number five, the only person whom I'm commanded to be one flesh with. Genesis 2:24. And this goes to the idea of sacred powers. Sacred powers are to be employed only between a man and a woman legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife. There's only one person that I'm commanded to be one flesh with, to use sacred powers. That's the person with whom I've entered into a covenant. What that does is it demarcates my wife or our spouses with every other human being on earth. You cannot be one flesh with anybody else. Number six, I left neutral ground as it relates to all other people in the world. I'm not on neutral ground with respect to my wife.

00:32:53 I'm not. She is the most important. She is preeminent. By the way, Jacob chapter three. I love the way Jacob lays it out when he's talking to the Nephites and rebuking them saying the Lamanites are setting a better example. Why? Because then here's the order. Husbands love their wives. Wives love their husbands. Husbands, wives love their children. She has to be preeminent. I'm not neutral with respect to her. And finally, there is a special love. A hesed. Of loyalty, of binnedness. When we bind ourselves by covenant with each other and vertically to God via a sealing ceremony. Those seven things. Now, here's the likeness to Jesus Christ. Because of the covenant, I make with the Lord, number one, he is the most important being to us. He is to be loved with all our heart, soul, and mind. That parallels number one with my wife. Number two, we are transformed by our faithfulness to the covenant and that we become new creatures.

00:33:55 So my relationship with Christ transforms me like my relationship with my wife transforms me. Number three, the covenants we make with him create a relationship with everlasting ties. Baptism isn't just for this life. What does Paul say in 1 Corinthians 15? If there was no resurrection, we are all men most miserable. If it's not an eternal thing, we don't care. Like I don't care. Number four, I am to cleave to God as he cleaves to me. Deuteronomy chapter 10, verse 20, Jacob chapter six, verse five. Number five, we are to be one with him as he is with his father, John 17: 2 through 23. 21 through 23. Also, Third Nephi 19. Number six, once we make a covenant with God, we left neutral ground forever as it relates to all other

priorities. Finally, number seven, there is Hesed, a special love, when we bind ourselves by covenant vertically to God.

- 00:34:57 I love to teach that in class. That my relationship with my spouse is to teach me about my relationship with God, and my relationship with God is to teach me the, the right orientation towards my spouse.
- Hank Smith: 00:35:10 Ross, isn't that the most common analogy in the Old Testament for Jehovah and Israel?
- John Bytheway: 00:35:17 Yeah. Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 00:35:18 Marriage. In fact, the one chapter Jesus quotes to the Nephites is Isaiah 54, which is about a woman who has been cast away and her husband is calling for her.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:35:31 He quotes the entire chapter. He quotes parts of 52, he quotes some Micah, right? And alludes to some others, but Isaiah 54 is literally the entire chapter, except for one minor change, exactly as it stands in our Bible. Which is about a relationship between spouses. That's correct.
- Hank Smith: 00:35:54 As we go through this year, we're gonna see that over and over. We're going to see this, Jehovah is calling for his wife, Israel, which is all of, all of the covenant people, not just women, women and men.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:36:06 The church is a woman, and he's the bridegroom. The idea is that woman is preparing for the bridegroom. That is the idea. This idea of the marriage relationship teaching me about my covenant with God, oh, my word, power. And then helps me be a better husband.
- John Bytheway: 00:36:23 Oh, Ross, I love this. I'm thinking of, if God wants to use marriage, the covenant of marriage as a model of our covenant with Him, what has happened to marriage in much of the Christian world? There's that idea in Matthew 22, Oh, they neither married nor given in marriage.
- Hank Smith: 00:36:46 The question is right on. Why use, why use this, the symbol of our eternal relationship? I'm gonna use it in a marriage. Oh, which by the way, that's not eternal. That doesn't make sense.
- John Bytheway: 00:36:57 Right. Right. Yeah, exactly.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:36:59 Number one, that's not what Jesus is saying. So, we gotta be clear. And I'm unapologetically gonna say most of the Protestant world probably thinks Matthew 22 on a superficial reading means, oh yeah, no, marriages go away. A, Jesus never said that there wouldn't be married people. He said that there is not gonna be marrying or giving in marriage, active verbs in the resurrection, meaning all issues of the marriage have to be done before the resurrection. Number two, I have a gospel scholar here who's not a Latter-day Saint. He wrote a commentary on the Gospel of Mark called the Gospel of Mark. His name's Ben Witherington. Page 328, he said, quote, "Jesus is saying that no new marriages will be initiated. This is surely not the same as claiming that all existing marriages will disappear." Unquote. In addition, God married Adam and Eve. Ecclesiastes chapter 3:14, what God does, he does for eternity.

00:38:01 God married Adam and Eve. What God does, it's eternal. The idea of Matthew 22, that's just not correct. I will also say this too, because I think your question's really interesting. Maybe we don't fully understand the import of a statement from the proclamation. Where it says that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God. Sometimes we think ordained of God means God approves it. Like, it's ordained of God. He approves that. I would actually say ordained of God, back to your comment earlier, John, about the order of the priesthood after the order of the Son of God. You could even rephrase it. Marriage between a man and a woman is after the order of God. It's not just approved. It's the order after which God lives. God lives in a family unit. This isn't something like, "Oh, man, he kind of winks halfway as we get married because that's a mortal thing we need." No, no, no, no.

00:39:01 When we get married, we're imitating God. That's the order after which he lives. The idea of Matthew 22, which is an awesome verse, by the way, and the Sadducees are trying to trip up Jesus with an absurd example, but he's not saying there's not marriage in the next life. Some people think that might be wishful thinking, but we're here to say that the Abrahamic Covenant, in fact, one of the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant is celestial marriage. And if we keep those corresponding responsibilities, we become an inheritor of that blessing. Just like Abraham will have Sarah for eternity. Hank will have Sara, his Sara, for eternity.

Hank Smith: 00:39:39 Since we're on this topic with both of you, this is a common question that missionaries get that can be hard for them. Here I am, you know, I'm 19, 20 years old. And someone says, "Hey, by the way, Jesus said people aren't married in heaven." What? He

did? I don't know that. All that we've discussed is very helpful. Let's discuss one more point of this is who Jesus is talking to. That is a critical part of this story. Ross, he's talking to Sadducees. Every gospel author makes that clear. They want that pointed out. Then the Sadducees came to him asking this question, which is interesting because Sadducees don't believe in the very thing they're asking about.

- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:40:19 So they don't even believe in the resurrection.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:21 Why ask this question?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:40:23 So there's something else going on. They're trying to trap him about something else. It actually has nothing to do with what somebody is attacking a missionary about. It has nothing to do with that, because Sadducees don't believe in resurrection.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:35 So, here you've got Sadducees coming saying, "Hey, who's gonna be married to who in the resurrection?" And Jesus knows. He knows what they believe, so he's gotta be thinking, "Why are you asking this?"
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:40:46 Yeah, super weird.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:47 Why are you asking this? He wouldn't be giving this, well, let's go off on a treaties on eternal marriage, to these people who who have no belief in it at all. They're almost mocking his belief in eternal-
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:40:58 That's right.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:59 ... marriage.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:41:00 Let me read a quote from Melvin J. Ballard who was a member of the Quorum of the 12. He's also the grandfather of the late M. Russell Ballard. He said this, quote, "No man or woman will come forth in the resurrection until he has completed his work, until he has overcome, until he has done as much as he can do. That is why Jesus said, In the resurrection, there is neither marriage or giving in marriage. For all such contracts, agreements will be provided for those who are worthy of it before men and women come forth in the resurrection." That's in Sermons and Missionary Service of Melvin J. Ballard, page 242. God is a God of miracles. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the entire earth. The Abrahamic Covenant is to include all of his children to bring them back. And one of the aspects of the

Abrahamic Covenant is to unite families for eternity, which will not leave anyone who wants on the outside.

- Hank Smith: 00:41:56 I think this will be fun because a lot of people don't even know this story. There's a prophet in the Old Testament who really wants to play out the symbolism of Jehovah, the husband and Israel, the wife. Would you mind just telling us that story briefly and then we'll come back to the manual?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:42:15 By the way, Hosea is the only prophet of the Northern Kingdom who left us any written prophecies. Most of the prophecy we have are from prophets of the Southern Kingdom who left things, but Hosea is a northern kingdom prophet. Probably, what, 730s, kind of maybe close to the time of Isaiah. Anyway, he comes up with a pretty brutal imagery of Israel as the wife. The idea that he's gonna put her away, put her into the wilderness, cause maybe some affliction in order to bring her back. I mean, that is the short and sweet version.
- Hank Smith: 00:42:59 And her name?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:43:00 Gomer.
- Hank Smith: 00:43:01 He marries Gomer.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:43:03 Yep.
- John Bytheway: 00:43:03 Which is so strange because Gomer is a character on the Andy Griffith Show, but it's a guy. So, I've never understood that.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:43:11 And if you could just maybe ask Barney Fife to say something about Gomer.
- John Bytheway: 00:43:17 Ah, you know, Gomer got a little bit, he doesn't have all that much upstairs. Yeah, maybe he'd say something like that.
- Hank Smith: 00:43:23 We will get to that book a little later in the year. I think we missed this, a little bit, in our discussion of the Abrahamic Covenant and how it is most prominently portrayed in the Old Testament. You almost could go through a series of lessons in the church on the Old Testament, and this might never be brought up because we might see it and go, "Oh, I don't really quite understand that. I'm going to skip it." He marries her so she will be unfaithful. He can treat her the way Jehovah treats Israel and then invite her back, which is the story that's being played out right now. We are part of the inviting back.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:44:03 That's right. We are inviting him back. That's how much God cares though. The, I mean, I think in the end, the idea is he wants her back and is doing everything he can to get her back. Things stretch into the spirit world and the temple helps work things out. And the millennium ... By the way, we know there's a millennium. We don't talk a ton about it, but the millennium is kind of a compensatory aspect of the plan of salvation that teaches us about the nature of Jesus Christ so that there's no loose ends. There are no loose ends. That the atonement of Jesus Christ is infinite, which means no one's left out. We might be like, "Well, how does that work?" Well, number one, we're stretching our second estate into the spirit world. And number two, there's a millennial day in which things can be worked out.

00:44:57 For families, for relationships, for broken relationships, for like the Hosea relationship, whether that's before Jesus comes or after Jesus comes fully in its fullest sense. I believe it's after Jesus comes that will fully work out the reconciliation.

John Bytheway: 00:45:16 Don't we say sometimes that right now we're kind of gathering the gatherers and that there will be more gathering at the beginning of the millennium? I mean, we'll do a lot of temple work during the millennium.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:45:28 Longview, it's long game. What surprises my students is quotes by Brigham Young, that there's gonna be Buddhists and Hindus and atheists, and there's gonna be those not of our faith on earth during the millennium. Why? Because they're living a terrestrial law. Because these are good, honorable people who will abide the day of the second coming because it's a terrestrial earth. The earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory, i.e., A terrestrial edenic state, not a celestial state. Good honorable people will be here. We're gonna be doing missionary work and inviting people, but there's gonna be no compulsion, there's gonna be no compelling, there's gonna be no force. It is gonna be honoring agency, but inviting all to come into Jesus Christ. In fact, we could say we're still playing out 100% the Abrahamic Covenant.

John Bytheway: 00:46:12 Hmm. How inclusive is that too? I'm thinking of what Josh Sears taught us a couple of weeks ago about ... I thought this was really good because I thought, oh my goodness, I've made that mistake. Thinking of watching Jesus, how Jesus treated people, how Jesus loved people, how Jesus served people, and not expanding that to say, Jesus and Jehovah, same being. Expand it to the Old Testament. This is the same being. Watch how he treated people through the Old Testament, not just the new. And I thought, "Oh, thank you for saying that, Josh."

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:46:45 I'll have students go, "Oh man, the God of the Old Testament, he's so harsh, he's so impatient." And I'll go, have you read the-

John Bytheway: 00:46:52 Have you read it?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:46:53 Old Testament? If I was God, I would've wiped him out way before that. He's the most patient, long suffering, kind, God. That is incredible.

Hank Smith: 00:47:03 Let's pivot really quick over to this part of the manual. Through covenants and ordinances, we become God's people. We become different from the world around us. President Nelson, the manual quotes him, "Our covenants bind us to him and give us godly power." When God blesses his people with his power, it is with the invitation and expectation that they will bless others, that they will be a blessing to all families of the earth. The Abrahamic Covenant is, yes, blessings, but it also is to be a blessing to the rest of the earth. Ross, what does the Lord mean when he says a couple of times, I think in the Old Testament, "You are a peculiar people. You are a holy nation. You are supposed to be different." Isn't part of the story of the Old Testament them not wanting to be different sometimes?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:47:55 Correct. I mean, that's everything we were saying earlier. This is the corresponding obligations of the covenant, is if I'm not living the gospel, which invites the Holy Ghost into my life to make me, sanctify me, make me holy. If I am not in fact caring for those in need, if I'm not inviting all to come into Christ, and if I'm not uniting families for eternity, at a certain point, then the blessing has to be taken away. Again, I'm currently serving as a bishop and I've been doing tithing declaration. The invitation I leave the members of my ward is-- I used to say, "Oh, honey, we have to pay tithing. We need to pay tithing." And now I say, "I get to pay tithing." And I invite them, next time they're gonna pay tithing, pause and just say, "I get to pay tithing." We get to be part of God's work.

00:48:43 In a hundred years, no one is gonna say, "Man, I wish I wouldn't have paid that tithing." This whole idea of being in God's work, again, it fills us with light and truth and peace and happiness. Now, that's not to say it's not hard sometimes. It is. There's no question about it. But when you align yourself with the obligation aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant, you are full of God's light because that's his work. Circling back to what I said earlier, it's when we stop doing those things is when those things are taken away from us and we're scattered. By the way, I think it's fascinating. Captain Moroni in the Book of Mormon does not call the Lamanites his enemies. He calls them my

brethren, but he does call Nephite dissenters enemies. You might go, "Well, why?" Somebody like Amalickiah. Amalickiah was a Nephite dissenter. In Alma 47, Mormon's like, it's strange to relate that that guy became worse.

- John Bytheway: 00:49:43 Yeah.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:49:44 Right. He was worse then. This goes to the idea of the parable of the talents. I give you a talent and you don't multiply that, then that, what was given you will be taken. You'll have less than what you had before. That light that gets taken becomes darkened. Joseph Smith said, "It will be from apostates that we will receive the greatest persecution." You can check that prophecy as being fulfilled. Why would that be? Well, because they had the light, the light was taken away, and now they become more fierce. Again, it's strange to relate, as Mormon says, more darkened in terms of their ... It's like Elder Maxwell said. They leave the church, but they can't leave it alone. And again, why? Well, again, this light that gets taken away. When I keep those corresponding obligations with those corresponding blessings, oh my word.
- 00:50:32 Light, peace, happiness. Again, not to say it's not hard, because anybody who's served a mission, anybody who's had a calling in the church, it can be very difficult. It can be very difficult. But when you're doing that, you're filled with light.
- John Bytheway: 00:50:44 Yeah. Broadly, who caused the most problems? For the Nephites, was it Lamanites or was it other Nephites?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:50:51 Nephite dissenters. Every single time.
- John Bytheway: 00:50:54 And who caused the most problems for Joseph Smith? Non-members? No. Yeah. Former members.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:51:00 Doctor Philastis Hurlbut.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:02 The good doctor. Right.
- John Bytheway: 00:51:03 The good doctor.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:51:05 The good doctor. And we're still talking about it and he's in the spirit world going, dang it.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:09 Why are they still talking? I thought that was just last year. Ross, I think the Book of Mormon is clear that the Lord doesn't scatter

Israel to punish them. He wants to save them. He's going to save them.

- John Bytheway: 00:51:21 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:22 By the way, Hank, this is your point. This is the book of Hosea. He's gonna scatter them with the intent of bringing them back. The scattering is gonna be a blessing. This is Adam. I'm gonna curse the earth for your sake. I'm scattering you for your sake. We're gonna end up blessing the world this way and doing lots of grafting, pruning, digging, and dunging. Jacob chapter five. The whole purpose is to do what? To bring you back into the covenant so that I can give you all that you're willing to receive. Period.
- John Bytheway: 00:51:52 Mm. Can I ask a question to you two Ph.D.'s right here since I've got you? We sometimes refer to the fall as a fortunate fall because it moved us forward in our progress. Am I okay in calling the scattering a fortunate scattering because it spread the blood of Abraham everywhere so that we get our patriarchal blessing and we discover, "Oh, I am House of Israel as well, or I am of Abraham as well." Could we say that it's a fortunate scattering? What do you think?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:52:24 I 100% think that's accurate, precisely correct, and the gospel of Jesus Christ is going to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. We've got the scattering and now we're gathering. What are we gathering to? We're gathering to temples. I think that's precisely correct. I like that. It's a fortunate scattering.
- John Bytheway: 00:52:42 I wanted to go back to that idea. You said it before, but I want to make sure we understand because I have some of my students that are uncomfortable with the idea of a chosen people because to them it sounds like we're all that and we're elite. But Hank, you know what I like to say? It's like being chosen to mow the lawn. It's like being chosen to "bring in the sheaves", to quote an old Protestant hymn. Can you comment on what it means to be chosen?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:53:08 Again, it begs the question, chosen for what? We're the chosen people. I say, "Okay, so what does it mean? Chosen for what?" It's chosen to wear out my life, chosen literally to wear out my life to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people. That's what I'm to do. And then the imagery Isaiah gives is that they're on our shoulders and tied to our bosom as we bring them back into the presence of God. The high priest. What does the high priest have on both shoulders? Six names of the house of Israel, six names of the house of Israel. What's over his heart? The

breastplate, 12 tribes of Israel. What's inside the breastplate? The Urim and Thummim, lights and perfection. With light and with perfection of Jesus Christ, I can carry the children of Israel back into the presence of God, back into the holy place.

00:53:50 Every single thing God's doing via his church, via the restoration, via the Abrahamic Covenant is literally to choose us to be able to go bring other people back. And bring us back to what? So remember in Isaiah 56, he says, Tell the people. Tell the people who say, the eunuchs. Remember eunuchs? They cannot say I'm a dry tree. Remember this passage? You cannot say, "Don't say I'm a dry tree." And they're like, "Wait, well, wait a minute. We are dry trees. We're eunuchs." Then he says, I'm gonna give you in my house--temple. A name and a hand, greater than son or daughter. Wait, greater than son or daughter? What would be a name greater than son and daughter for a eunuch? Father would be a greater name. By going to the temple. We're not talking about temporal stuff. You can become a father. That's the name.

00:54:50 Even an everlasting name says, right, Shem Olam, that will not be cut off. You can now have an everlasting name. Well, what's the everlasting name better than son or daughter? It's father, it's mother. Because of the gospel of Jesus Christ, whether in this life or in the life to come, you can have a name greater than son or daughter. That's powerful.

John Bytheway: 00:55:11 Hmm. That is awesome.

Hank Smith: 00:55:15 If I'm teaching seminary or Sunday school this year, how do I encourage young people that it's okay to be different? I know it can be tiring sometimes be the one that gets up at dark 30 in the morning to go to Bible study while everybody else sleeps in. Why do we have to be different? That word peculiar is interesting. A kingdom of priests and priestesses. You're gonna be different. You really can't make a difference unless you're different.

John Bytheway: 00:55:45 No. Ooh, I like that.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:55:46 Yeah, that's good. I have loved the new For Strength of Youth. And let me tell you why. I have nine children. One of my daughters is 12. Hank, we've had these conversations recently. One of the things that I keep coming back when we have these great conversations, because she'll say, "These girls are wearing short shorts to here and mom wants me to wear shorts to here." That was a big summer conversation. I would simply say, "Hey, Lucy, share with me your values about who Jesus Christ is

and how you wanna become more like him and how wearing that outfit would align yourself with Christ. Now, if you can make that argument to me, I'll go to the mat for you on what you wanna do." By the way, that's not how I used to be. I used to be, "Well, hey, in the for Strength of Youth, it says this is what it's gotta be."

00:56:34 I don't do that anymore. I ask her, we believe in Jesus Christ. You believe? Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ. Okay. Then just share with me how that would align with your faith in Jesus Christ. And we've had some great conversations. As soon as you say that, it brings the Holy Ghost. I don't wanna force or compel or coerce, but I do want her to be able to articulate to me in a way that frames it where we bring Jesus Christ back into the picture.

John Bytheway: 00:57:04 Something really interesting happened with the new guide, the For the Strength of Youth Guide. I found at the Deseret Industries, the 1965 for the Strength of Youth, I bought it for a quarter. It's only 16 pages long. No mention of television, no mention of movies. Do you know why? In 65, the number ... Best picture was the Sound of Music. Best TV show was, obviously, the Andy Griffith Show. Over time, the book got longer and longer and longer until it was about 43 pages. And then this new one got shorter. The reason why is because exactly what you were talking about. Some got it, opened it right up, went to dress code first thing. When actually opening up the book, in my opinion, is step three. Step one was President Nelson pleading with us to learn to hear him. Step two was be willing to let God prevail.

00:58:04 That's what Israel means. Those who are willing to let God prevail. Then just as you described, Ross, how am I honoring my body? Then step three, you open it up. The subtitle on this guide says, "A guide for making choices." It doesn't say these choices have been made for you. See page 35. It says, "You are going to make the choice. You'll be accountable for the choice. Are you willing to hear him and let God prevail?" Then open up the book. What do you think?

Hank Smith: 00:58:33 I love it. Just a thought President Hinckley used to repeat, he'd say, "What appears to be a sacrifice will end up being an investment that will pay you dividends for the rest of your life." The Lord is good. What's Hesed mean, Ross? You're a chosen people, chosen to bless the entire earth. Because you're the chosen people, you get this special love. God loves all of his children. This Hesed, do I do enough here in, that you told me to do? That's reserved for this chosen people.

Dr. Ross Baron:	00:59:07	1st Nephi 17:40, and he loveth those who will have him to be their God.
John Bytheway:	00:59:11	The book doesn't make choices for you. It puts the responsibility on us to hear him, to let God prevail, and then we make the choice. The standards, to me, are the same, but the responsibility for making those choices has shifted to us, and that's how the Lord is counting on us.
Dr. Ross Baron:	00:59:29	And what that does is it creates a different kind of disciple in these latter days. I was doing a little calculation. The 18-year-old age change corresponds to ... Those 18-year-olds are the ones who turned 11 where he said, "We're gonna have the 11-year-olds now become into young men and young women." They're now 18. The Lord is working through his prophets via the For the Strength of Youth, because as President Nelson said in the talk, the Everlasting Covenant, they're becoming sin resistant souls via the covenant. Why? Because John, like you said, they're letting God prevail. They're trying. That creates a peculiar people, a kingdom of priests and priestesses and kings and queens. That creates that. Hank knows, I mean, Hank's got kids. I've got kids this age. It's not always easy and they're still struggling through it. There's some amazing differences going on. Some powerful things happening.
John Bytheway:	01:00:31	Yeah. And I feel like we could draw some parallels with home teaching going to ministering. The third hour of church being held at home, boy, it's putting more on us.
Dr. Ross Baron:	01:00:43	I shared something from Genesis 22 in our last followHIM episode. This is at the end of it where I believe in Genesis 22, this is the story of Abraham and Isaac, where the angel comes stopping him and then gives him a blessing. This ties a little bit back to the Abrahamic Covenant and to the role of Jesus Christ. Can I share that?
John Bytheway:	01:01:07	Absolutely.
Dr. Ross Baron:	01:01:08	Genesis chapter 22, verses 16 and 17. He's gone through it. The angel has stopped him. The angel speaking as if he were the Savior. Says, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing; and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore" Notice those are all super familiar to us, talking about seed and posterity, but then he says this, "and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies". Now in the ancient world, and I know both of you

have been to the Holy Land multiple times, if you control the gate, you control the city.

- 01:01:52 The gate is the key. We read this and I don't think it resonates with us because it is culturally distant. That the seed of Abraham is gonna possess the gate of his enemies. To possess the gate means you control things. Who's our enemy? Ultimately, our enemy is death and sin. The seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ, is gonna possess the gate of the enemy, which ultimately is death and sin. Because of Abraham and Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ, death and sin will be 100% overcome. Hence, it will also be overcome for me, for you, and for anybody listening. And then we get to be the proclaimers of that fabulous message, that because of Jesus Christ, we possess the gate of our enemy, and in the end, our enemy is death and sin. I love that idea in terms of the Abrahamic Covenant that he ends with that.
- 01:02:53 Your seed, Jesus Christ, is gonna possess the gate of his enemies. Then we get to possess the gate of our enemies because of Jesus Christ. Then we get to proclaim that message to all the world to include them in that power.
- John Bytheway: 01:03:04 Beautiful. And I feel like the popular expectation of the Messiah was, what, to deliver them from the Romans, but he was like, "Yeah, we've got tougher enemies like death and sin." Yeah, right?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:03:16 I'm going to die. That's a fact. And I'm separated from God. And these are two facts. Because of Jesus Christ and because of the restoration, we are overcoming both. Like Section 59 says, I can have peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. What great blessings. And that peace in life--this life--comes if I align myself with my obligations with respect to the Abrahamic Covenant.
- Hank Smith: 01:03:39 Sometimes the Lord says, I'm gonna bless you. I'm like, "You keep using that word. I don't think it means what you... "
- John Bytheway: 01:03:45 I don't think it means what you think it means. Yeah.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:03:48 Elder Holland, can we maybe get some blessings that aren't in disguise? You know what I mean? Like-
- John Bytheway: 01:03:53 That's good.

Hank Smith: 01:03:56 What did Elder Maxwell say? We're wondering what all the, what all the shouting was about?

John Bytheway: 01:04:00 All the sons of God shouted for joy.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:04:03 Yeah, what was that about again?

Hank Smith: 01:04:04 Sure. I like this.

John Bytheway: 01:04:05 Yeah. Ross, I love the more we understand the Abrahamic Covenant and Abraham, the more empowering it is to think, "I am Abraham's seed. I'm part of that. " But would it be okay if I could be the seed of Abraham and not have any Abrahamic tests in my life?

Hank Smith: 01:04:22 Yeah, please.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:04:23 I like how you laughed as you asked the question. I'd sure appreciate it. I don't think it's possible. Part of it is quoting Hymn 27, "Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven". Sacrifice in the Latin means to make holy sacrifice--in Hebrew--I mean, all of these ideas are that God, I think, in the end, wants to see really where our heart is. I think Ether chapter 12: 6, "ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith". You might ask, "Well, why?" Well, I think partly because he wants to see if it is the thing we truly desire.

John Bytheway: 01:05:01 I heard somebody say once God is more interested in our growth than he is in our comfort. And we think, "Oh, darn. I want him to be really interested in my comfort."

Hank Smith: 01:05:12 My comfort, yeah.

John Bytheway: 01:05:15 But no, more interested in our growth and in the long term. I mean, all of us, this is such a theme. All of us can look back on hard times and think, "Man, I really grew during that" or "I really learned this", or, "My faith really grew and I don't want ... I'm not asking for hard times," but I look back and I say--what was your talk that you gave Hank? Was this a trial or a blessing?

Hank Smith: 01:05:38 Trial blessing or both. At the time it's a trial, it ends up becoming, somehow a blessing, beauty for ashes.

John Bytheway: 01:05:45 Mm-hmm.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:05:46 I wonder if there needs to be a certain self-awareness when the test comes to kind of recognize in a meta way, "Wow, this is the trial. Now I get to show how I'm gonna respond."

Hank Smith: 01:06:01 I remember that. Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:06:03 I've shared before I had stage four cancer and I remember transcending saying, "Okay, okay. This is actually a test. I'm being tested right now." I get to show God and my family and my ward and my other people, how I'm gonna respond. And I have lots of different choices of how I'm gonna respond. I get to now determine how I get to respond. And again, I wasn't left alone. I could turn to God, I could get help, and I did. And I testify that God did in fact help me and bless me. I'm not saying I did it perfectly, but I knew I needed to respond a particular way.

John Bytheway: 01:06:42 Wow. It reminds me of the handcart pioneer that said we became acquainted with God in our extremity.

Hank Smith: 01:06:50 I remember when our family went through a series of deaths, I had that exact thought, Ross, is, "Listen, you've taught this for a long time." Yeah, you get a chance to live it. How are you gonna do? I remember that profound, "You're right, I better put the proverbial money where your mouth is. You've taught this for how long? Do you believe it?" There's a seminary teacher up in Rexburg. Bruce Parker, my friend John Parker, who Ross and I both know, great teacher. It's his dad. He was a seminary teacher in Rexburg for decades. On a Sunday afternoon, his daughter and her best friend had gone out to a care center to do a musical number. Were on their way back. The Parkers were gonna have family pictures, and Michelle is late. And why is she late? Where is she? And they get the news that she and her best friend were both killed in a accident, car accident.

01:07:48 Bruce had been the seminary teacher for decades. I think all of Rexburg came to the funeral and he wanted an opportunity to say something, and he didn't say much. John Parker, his son, told me he walked to the pulpit and he quoted Job. When Job said, "Though He, " meaning Jehovah, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." That to me is what we're talking about. I believe I will be a peculiar person.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:08:23 And we're gonna allow it to sanctify us and allow it to change us and transform us. Back to the idea of the transformative nature of that relationship via covenant, because I willingly, voluntarily entered into the covenant. And like Elder Brown said, our testimony is forever, our covenant's forever as well.

Hank Smith: 01:08:43 Yeah. Ross, we don't wanna keep you too long because we get you ... Next month, we're gonna talk again. If I'm a reader this year and I really wanna understand the Old Testament, where is this gonna come up? Where should I be watching for it?

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:08:56 Like I said earlier, the first mention of covenant, the word covenant is in with Noah, and that's in Genesis chapter six, verse 18, then repeated in chapter nine, starting in verse 11, where we're gonna really get into, in terms of the Abrahamic Covenant. In the Old Testament, it's gonna be starting in Genesis 15, Genesis 17 is where you'd really wanna look. And then Abraham 2:9-11, powerful stuff. Section 132, if you wanted supplementary material, starting in around verse 35, there's a whole series of things about Abraham and the promises made to Abraham and the new and everlasting covenant. That's exciting stuff. Then to study the life of Abraham, John, you brought up Abraham chapter one where Abraham wants to be a greater follower of righteousness. Abraham chapter one and two, again, the story of Abraham, which is 11 through essentially 25, that's gonna get you a ton of that material.

01:09:56 But note, again, as we talked about earlier, the covenant doesn't start with Abraham. I mean, we're gonna talk about the Abrahamic Covenant, but we have to realize this idea of premortality, of Jesus being ordained, of us agreeing to it, coming to earth, et cetera. Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, in the latter days, Joseph Smith. Section 110, by the way, connects it back. You have all the blessings now of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so that in the and thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Blessed with what? Blessed with all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Hank Smith: 01:10:30 And then Ross as Genesis keeps going, I'm gonna see this family, how they behave under this covenant. They might not say it often, but I'm watching this.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:10:39 Oh, that's right. In fact, the whole thing is about the covenant, the weaving in and out of--we're keeping the covenant, God's working with them to keep the covenant. Joseph becomes, starting in Genesis 37, going to the end of the book of Genesis, a type of Christ and a type of a redeemer in an incredible, fascinating, powerful way. Also, I hope I can do in coming months, what I call maybe the second fall, which is when God wants to give them--the House of Israel-- the gospel, the holy covenant, but they end up worshiping a calf. Then what does God do as a result of that is one of the more fascinating things that happens in the Old Testament. And I think a little unclear for some people. So, starting in Exodus chapter 32, you go

through this amazing thing of how God handles it when they do break the covenant, but doesn't abandon them.

- John Bytheway: 01:11:35 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 01:11:36 Despite giving Him every reason to. Yeah.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:11:39 No, that's the truth. Yeah. Amen. That's back to my point about how patient God was.
- John Bytheway: 01:11:44 So the covenant God made with Abraham, which he made with Adam and ever since, but we call it Abrahamic Covenant, continues with Jacob and his posterity, therefore continues with us.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:11:57 Therefore, continues with us because of the restoration. So, in other words, on April 3rd, 1836, that entire Abrahamic covenant was renewed upon the head of Joseph Smith, and it literally says in Section 110, so that in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Now, we receive that authorization to be able to go carry the blessings of Abraham out to every single person on both sides of the veil, right? On both sides of the veil as children of Abraham.
- John Bytheway: 01:12:28 Wonderful.
- Hank Smith: 01:12:30 Then just to make sure, Ross, they're gonna be in Egypt for how long?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:12:35 430 years.
- Hank Smith: 01:12:36 430 years. And then the Lord basically says, "Okay, we're gonna try again." You're still my people. Almost what? Exodus through Kings, is that we're gonna try again, and then the Lord says, okay, that didn't work.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:12:55 We're still gonna try.
- Hank Smith: 01:12:56 We're still gonna work with you. We're gonna scatter you. Then that seems to be almost the rest of the book. We're gonna scatter you and I'm gonna keep working with you because one day, one future day, I will.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:13:06 I'll just keep working. We're gonna keep pruning, dunging, digging, and we're gonna keep doing this. And again, the point, Hank, I would love people to remember because it's not complicated. If I stop doing my obligations, I then lose the

blessings. There's the key. So, you could trace the thread. Why are they being scattered? Oh, this is why. They've stopped doing these things. They don't care for the needy. They're not living their commandments. They're not inviting other people to come unto Christ. They think they're above everybody else. These are issues that are occurring. As a result, we're being scattered.

- Hank Smith: 01:13:42 The lesson will be taught until it is learned.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:13:45 It will be. It will be.
- John Bytheway: 01:13:48 Well, this has been wonderful. I got pages of notes. I just don't know how you understand the Book of Mormon without understanding the Abrahamic Covenant. I can't wait to have you back again. Next time, Our Thoughts to Keep in Mind will be more specifically about what we just talked about, the House of Israel. What it means to be part of that and Jacob or Israel's children and how we connect to that as well.
- Hank Smith: 01:14:14 Yeah, we're gonna talk tribes. We're gonna talk patriarchal blessings. We're gonna talk a little about Ross's time in the House of Judah. We're gonna talk the House of Ephraim. But I think it'll be exciting for, for our listeners to say, oh, I wanna learn about these different tribes and how it connects to me in my life.
- John Bytheway: 01:14:32 Yeah.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:14:33 Yeah, that'll be fun. I'm excited.
- John Bytheway: 01:14:35 Well, this has been a great day. I love the identity power that comes from singing, "I Am a Child of God", but I think this takes it a step higher. Not only am I a child of God, I am part of Abraham's family. Ross Baron, thank you for joining us today. We'll look forward to more Thoughts to Keep in Mind. Next time, we hope you will all join us here on followHIM.
- Hank Smith: 01:15:04 Thank you for joining us on today's episode. Do you or someone you know speak Spanish, Portuguese, or French? You can now watch and listen to our podcast in those languages. Links are in the description below. Today's show notes and transcript are on our website, followhim.co. That's followhim.co. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, Sydney Smith, and Annabel Sorensen.

