



John Bytheway: 00:00:05 Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of followHIM. Today we are looking at another entry in our Thoughts to Keep in Mind. We have with us our friend Dr. Ross Baron. Thank you for joining us again, Ross.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:00:20 Thrilled to be here. So excited.

John Bytheway: 00:00:23 Hank, are you excited to look at the historical books of the Old Testament?

Hank Smith: 00:00:27 Well, two things. One, I love Ross Baron. A great soul, great man. I do pick on him quite a bit, but it's our love language. I call it affectionate disrespect. And second, we talked before we hit record here. Some of the greatest stories you'll ever hear of people following and loving God and following prophets are in these books, and yet I don't know if we appreciate them like we could.

John Bytheway: 00:00:53 And it's interesting that they would even have a lesson called the Historical Books in the Old Testament. Okay, well what are the other books? Hopefully we can talk about all of that today as we are trying to increase our Old Testament literacy on followHIM this year. Why don't I read the first paragraph in the Thoughts to Keep in Mind and then we will turn it to you, Ross, and you could take off. This is what our official manual says. The books of Joshua through Esther are traditionally known as the historical books of the Old Testament. This doesn't mean that the other books in the Old Testament don't have historical value. Rather, the historical books are called that because their writer's main objective was to show God's hand in the history of the people of Israel. The purpose was not to outline the law of Moses as Leviticus and Deuteronomy do.

00:01:44 It's kind of fun to say Deuteronomy do. It was not to express praise or lament in poetic form as the Psalms and Lamentations

do. Yeah, what would you think a book called Lamentations would be about? And it was not to record the words of prophets as the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel do. Instead, the historical books tell stories. Do you know we love stories? Ross, from there, where do you want to take us in understanding? Let's see, it's Joshua, Judges, Ruth, first second Kings, first second Samuel, first second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:02:20 I think it's really good that you laid that out right there in terms of Joshua all the way to the book of Esther. What is it covering? Well, it's covering the entry into the promised land. So, we're talking about Joshua. Moses is now gone and Joshua's the prophet. We're in the book of Joshua. We're going to go into the promised land. Then it's going to go all the way to Esther. Now think about this. It's going to go all the way to the fifth century. We're going to the Persian empire. The Assyrian empire will have been gone. Babylonian empire gone and we're going to get to the Persian empire. The scattering of the northern tribes, the scattering of Judah, then the return of a group of Jews to the Holy Land. I calculated. It's 370 pages, which is about not quite a third of the entire text of the Old Testament.
- 00:03:12 The historical books are about one third. In terms of timing, both of you have been to the Holy Land. I love when people are saying, "So is this where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead?" And I always like to say, "Very close to around here."
- Hank Smith: 00:03:28 It's, it's around here.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:03:29 It's around here. We're really close. When people say, well, what's the dating? I always like to say, give or take 150 years, it's this. And some people feel more strongly about it than others. The historical book, starting with Joshua and ending in Esther, is probably from around 1230 BC all the way up to maybe the latest would be 435 BC. Now, we can peg some dates like Esther becomes the queen in a particular year of Xerxes reign and we can nail that at 478 BC, if you trust those records. We're looking around 800 plus years of history. 800 years. If you think about the United States of America, 1776 to now, this is, well, not quite four times that amount of history. So, it's a lot of history. It's a lot of time. We're covering it in a third.
- John Bytheway: 00:04:25 This is a great way to look at it. Joshua's going to take them into the promised land, and as I'm reading that list, I'm going, wait, doesn't Nehemiah? Isn't he released from Babylonian captivity

to come back and rebuild the walls around Jerusalem? Those captivities are in here. You said that, the Assyrians, the Babylonians.

- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:04:42 And then the Persians, right. It's a little complicated and a lot of geography is involved and disparate places and a lot of place names, a lot of different empires interacting and crossing and there's a lot to keep track of, right? I think that's great and interesting. The fascinating thing though, and I think this is cool, that everything after Esther actually can be folded into the historical books. If you're looking at Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all the minor prophets, they all can be then be situated in the historical books. Sometimes we think we're reading like chronologically, we're just reading straight through. Well, no, no, no. They're all situated within these historical books and I think that's important to understand. Malachi is actually, again, probably the last prophetic book before the intertestamental period, before the end of Malachi, before Christ comes. Then Ezra and Nehemiah are the last historical books chronologically before the New Testament as well.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:50 So what if Mormon decided to, to do it this way? He wrote the entire history of the Nephites and then he said, okay, here's the teachings of Nephi. Here's the teachings of Jacob. Here's the teachings of Alma. And you could say, oh, we can take that and put those back in. He decided to do them at the same time, storyline and sermon.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:06:09 Yeah, which I think is really interesting. And you get a little of that. For example, you get Isaiah in Kings. You'll get some of those kinds of things, but nothing like the way Mormon does it. Mormon situates the prophets in the narrative, so they're getting the narrative frame, whereas these are like you're reading Isaiah 66 chapters separate and distinct from the book. Well, that's a really good way to look at it. I like it. I like that.
- John Bytheway: 00:06:35 Aren't there some places in Chronicles that sound exactly like verses in Kings, like verbatim?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:06:42 Yes. There's places in Chronicles that are verbatim, and then there's also places in Chronicles that are quite distinct. For example, you have the story of David recounted without the Bathsheba Uriah story. Whoever's narrating those other books didn't really want to put that in. That's in Samuel. That's not in Kings or Chronicles. I think that's, again, that there's an editorial decision being made and maybe there's an audience they were thinking about, but they made a decision. We're not going to include the murder of Uriah or the adultery with Bathsheba in

those other books. Sometimes, John, it's verbatim and sometimes there are actual little editions that are given to us that can be quite helpful.

- Hank Smith: 00:07:22 Ross, does that say these writers did not know they were gonna be in the same book, right? Like, we're gonna leave that out.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:07:28 We're gonna leave that one out. Uh-oh, I didn't know they were gonna put Samuel in there. Yeah. Yeah. And by the way, I think it's interesting among a lot of people, religious people, Latter-day Saints do tend to focus on what David did in the Book of Samuel and other Christians and other Jews don't often, that that's not a story they wanna bring up and they don't quote that from there. Again, editorial decisions being made and how we are going to introduce this to our particular audience.
- John Bytheway: 00:07:58 When I was in seminary, if we wanted to graduate, we had to read--that year that we had an Old Testament, they gave us selections. It wasn't all of it. I think that's because some of these things are repeated.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:08:10 And very, very, like you said, there's texts that are just word for word. You think one of them had the other or had fragments of the other, it's difficult to say. Yeah, it's difficult to-
- Hank Smith: 00:08:20 Ross, let me back up for just a second. There might be someone listening who says, "You mean the Bible wasn't like meant to be together?" I know that you and I might be going, "Oh yeah, everybody knows that." But what if someone listening doesn't know that? What if they don't know that this is actually a library, not a book? Is that right, Ross?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:08:39 Yeah, that's 100% right. The kind of the canonization or what becomes an authoritative text often takes lots of time and lots of debating and lots of deciding how we determine this fancy phrase called canonicity, right? What's gonna be canon, what's not gonna be canon. It's interesting because Jesus will quote scriptures and Paul will quote scriptures and some of them we don't have. Where is that?
- John Bytheway: 00:09:07 Where's that now?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:09:07 So there's a famous prophecy in Matthew 2, it says, and he's gonna dwell in Nazareth, so it'll be fulfilled by the prophets that says he'll be a Nazarene. That's nowhere. And that's an important prophecy about Jesus that we don't currently have. This, the process by which everything is put together and then

determined is an important one and is not super clear and kind of messy, not the same authors. What's fascinating to me is by the time you get canonicity or you get a kind of an authoritative book, then sometimes there's arguments.

00:09:39 So for example, even today, if you get a Catholic Bible, you'll have books in the Catholic Bible that are not accepted by mainstream Protestantism or by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They're interesting books, like I'm not disparaging the Catholic Church in any way by saying this. I'm simply saying that was a decision that they made in terms of what would be authoritative, what would be canon. And it's a fascinating process. You know, when somebody says to me, "Well, in Revelation 22, it says you can't add to or take away from the Bible." That's not what the text says. It says you can't take away from this book.

00:10:14 Well, this book isn't the Bible because there was no Bible then. There was no New Testament. They didn't have little blue New Testaments. The New Testament, another Testament of Jesus Christ, they did not have that. They had letters and different things, but mostly when Paul is admonishing them to study the scriptures, that's the Old Testament. That's not the New Testament. They don't have a New Testament. The New Testament doesn't get authoritatively canonized till about 367 AD. Think about that. 367 AD. Yeah, it's an interesting messy process. The Book of Mormon, of course, narrated or edited by prophets and seers and then brought forth in the latter days by a prophet, canonized immediately, whereas other books took some time. Or another question would be like you've been... So why didn't they bring up that story? Like, why didn't that writer bring up that story?

00:11:06 Like, what's going on? Again, different audiences, different editor, different agenda. What are we gonna highlight? What are we not gonna highlight? You guys have both spoken countless times to different groups and I know if I'm teaching a bunch of high priests, I'm not as funny. When I'm teaching a bunch of youth, my story's way funnier.

Hank Smith: 00:11:24 Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:11:24 I do that on purpose because my audience, I'm gonna adjust. I wanna tell the same story. I'm just gonna tell it in a different way, because the high priests aren't that funny.

John Bytheway: 00:11:35 The same explanation could be offered for different tellings of Joseph Smith's first vision. Well, here I was telling some friends,

well, here I was, this is an official account. Well, here's somebody just wrote this in their journal.

- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:11:46 Right. And Joseph essentially decides that that 1838 one, this is gonna be the authoritative one, but he's okay with other versions and the Wentworth Letter apparently was one he really liked. I mean, there's a lot of stuff going back and forth on that. The lens that I wanna look at it through though, because somebody listening or a seminary teacher or somebody who's teaching Gospel Doctrine, it's a lot of text, by the way. So, it's not streamlined. It's up and down and back and forth. I wanna say, okay, so here's the overarching lens, which is something that I have brought up repeatedly in Thoughts to Keep in Mind, and that is the Abrahamic Covenant. The storyline needs to be seen through the frame of the Abrahamic Covenant and following the Lord's prophets because the cycle and the whole thing is when the Lord's people keep the obligations associated with the covenant, follow his authorized servants, they receive the corresponding blessings.
- 00:12:42 When they don't, that's when they lose the protection and the blessings of the Lord. This is the kind of constant theme going throughout. The other interesting theme, so that's number one frame. So, if I was teaching, I would make that part of the frame to help students. The other one is the nature of God. I think we've talked about this before, but a lot of people on a superficial reading think that the God of the Old Testament is impatient and he's angry and he's harsh. Like if you read this 800-year history, he is patient and long suffering and willing to work with people and give them repetitive opportunities to do the right thing. I see God here as merciful, patient, long suffering. He works with them. He never fully abandoned them unless they fully abandoned Him, even in their rebellions, and what I call their casual covenant keeping, their outright idolatry, their wickedness and their whoredoms, and he works with them at their different levels.
- 00:13:41 So in a way, like if I'm listening to this, I hope you're excited to teach it because God is working with people at their levels to try to bring them to a higher level. I always teach in my New Testament class, Christ will always meet you where you are and then invite you to go higher. Always, always, always. So he's meeting them where they are. Sometimes that's pretty low. Then he's going to try to invite them to kind of move up and it's going on and on and on and on. That's kind of the main frame through which I want to see this. Abrahamic Covenant and the character of God.

Hank Smith: 00:14:16 Maybe, Ross, we could do a little bit of a, "Hey, just so you know, this is what's gonna happen." You have this House of Israel, this group of people, they come into the promised land. Here we go. We're gonna keep the covenant. We're gonna be the people that bless the whole earth and it's not gonna happen.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:14:34 Stay tuned. Spoiler alert.

Hank Smith: 00:14:36 Yeah. Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:14:36 That's probably not gonna happen. Deuteronomy is essentially Moses pleading and begging and giving his discourses about like, come on, you guys, like, this'll be amazing. We can do this. God will just pour out his blessings upon you. Then if you don't mind, again, let's go through some key events. You got Joshua goes in the promised land and there's Canaanites there and they get into the promised land and chapters, like one through seven are pretty amazing actually, in Joshua. We're crossing the River Jordan and then it's partying and we've got the Ark of the Covenant, then we've got Jericho, and then a lot of chapters in Joshua are how we're gonna inhabit the land. Land inheritances and who's going where and who's going what. Then interestingly, the end of life of Joshua, if you're reading carefully, they're already getting a little off the track.

00:15:28 So in Joshua 24, he's gonna have another covenant renewal ceremony. End of Deuteronomy, Moses has a covenant renewal ceremony and the end of the book of Joshua happens again. We're gonna do this again. It's just like you said, Hank, it's like, okay, "choose ye this day". Okay. Then we get into the Book of Judges. Now the Book of Judges is an interesting book because it's a loose confederation of the tribes. Some people think, oh, it's the House of Israel they were all united. They really weren't. It was a loose confederation of tribes. They had different overlapping judges. Some of the famous ones are like Gideon and Samson. The end of the Book of Judges has this very amazing statement. In Judges 21. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. By the way, that is like the best summary of the Book of Judges.

00:16:24 It's this free for all. After you get out of the Book of Judges, an amazing thing happens and that is you get Samuel. Hannah is the mother of Samuel and we're gonna talk about Hannah in a little bit. Samuel is amazing. Samuel is a true prophet. In chapter--1 Samuel 3, starting in verse 19, it says, "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." What a great line about a prophet. And all

Israel, now here's a statement. From Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. So, from Dan to Beersheba would be like saying from sea to shining sea, in our terms. It's the whole of it. So, Dan is north. Beersheba is in the negative, it's way south. From Dan to Beersheba, everyone knows that Samuel is established to be a prophet.

00:17:19 And what 1 Samuel is doing, it's doing the contra of what happened in the Book of Judges. We're starting to get a prophet who everyone recognizes as a prophet. And he's a judge, by the way. He's not a king, he's a judge, he's a judge/prophet. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh. Now, Shiloh is important because Shiloh is where the tabernacle was. A lot of people might think, the tabernacle was in Jerusalem, or on the hill of Jerusalem, but it's actually not. It's in this place called Shiloh. That's where Eli the priest is. He's one of the high priests. Samuel is raised there. But Samuel is a mighty prophet. What happens when Samuel comes again? 1 Samuel chapter seven, covenant renewal. We had Deuteronomy, God working with them. You guys, you have fallen off from the covenant. Let's try this again. Joshua 24. Let's try this again.

00:18:12 Samuel, the Book of Judges, kind of a disaster. First Samuel chapter seven. Let's try this again. So we're going to do it again. Both of you have been to Nabi Samuil. I'm getting a blank stare. Okay. We take the students at the Jerusalem Center to Nabi Samuil. It's probably nine, 10 miles north of Jerusalem and it's supposed to be the site at which Samuel was buried. It's also maybe the site of this covenant renewal ceremony in 1 Samuel chapter seven. So it's a very interesting thing that happens in 1 Samuel seven where Samuel and his kind of prophetic authority binds them, puts them in a covenant and then there's this dramatic instance where the Philistines are gonna attack them and God thunders because Samuel's prayed for them. They sacrifice a sucking lamb. There's a very Christ-centered thing happening here. The blood and then God protects the people.

00:19:05 That's good. So we have 1 Samuel. Then an amazing thing happens. Like the very next chapter they say, "We want a king." So they've had judges and by the way, not a great experience with judges, frankly, except for Samuel. Samuel's been amazing. Samuel's getting old. Samuel's got some sons who aren't the greatest guys in the world. The people come to Samuel and say, hey, we wanna be like other nations. We want a king. Samuel's upset. And I think Samuel takes it personally and he goes to the Lord and the Lord says, they haven't rejected you, they've rejected me. Then he says, warn them, but if they want the

king, you give them the king. He prophesies to them that it's not gonna end well. Then he gives them the king. And a lot of people have said, well, why would God do that? Why doesn't he just say no? Like, absolutely, just say no.

00:19:53 You know, students have asked me that and teachers have been like, why do I ...? So how would you brethren respond? Lord says, I know it's gonna be bad, but Samuel give them a king.

John Bytheway: 00:20:03 That's a good question. Book of Mormon would say the Lord granteth unto men according to their desire, that's what they want. I love that the Lord said, okay, but tell him. They're gonna take your sons, they're gonna take your daughters, they're gonna make them run before your chariots. I mean, he gets this big list. If you want, this is what's gonna happen and they choose it anyway. So, I guess at least he warns them.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:20:26 Yeah, he warns them. And President Benson gave this famous thing he called the Samuel principle. I'm reading from a talk President Benson gave called Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations from a BYU talk December 10th, 1974. He said, quote, "God has to work through mortals of varying degrees of spiritual progress. Sometimes he temporarily grants to men their unwise requests in order that they might learn from their own sad experiences. Some refer to this as the "Samuel principle." The children of Israel wanted a king, like all the nations. The prophet Samuel was displeased and prayed to the Lord about it. The Lord responded by saying to Samuel, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." The Lord told Samuel to warn the people of the consequences if they had a king. Samuel gave them the warning, but they still insisted on their king. So, God gave them a king and let them suffer. They learned the hard way. God wanted it to be otherwise, but within certain bounds he grants unto men according to their desires." John, which you just quoted in Alma 29. "Bad experiences are an expensive school that only fools keep going to" Ezra Taft Benson.

John Bytheway: 00:21:41 Yeah. Wow, that's great.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:21:44 What does that teach us about the character of God? What does it teach us about the plan of salvation? What are your thoughts?

John Bytheway: 00:21:51 I'm just thinking of that phrase that we hear so often, they will learn by their own experience to determine the good from the evil. And here they're learning. I told you this. And maybe they can go back and say, you know, we should have listened. Maybe

there would be a great lesson in that. The Lord told us exactly what would happen and it did.

- Hank Smith: 00:22:11 And it did.
- John Bytheway: 00:22:13 Isn't this exactly if I could compress Isaiah, which is maybe a, a bad idea, but- ... Isn't he always saying, stop making alliances with other nations. Make God your ally. That's what you do. And this is what they wanna do. We wanna be like the other nations instead of making God our ally.
- Hank Smith: 00:22:31 I like the simplicity of how you're putting this, Ross. They're the chosen people. They're gonna bless the whole earth. We'd rather have a king.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:22:41 Everybody else has a king.
- John Bytheway: 00:22:43 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 00:22:43 The Lord's not gonna make you be the chosen people. Part of being chosen is choosing to be chosen. What's the Lord gonna do? He's like, okay, but I won't give up on you. I will not give up on you. You're gonna be my chosen family, but I'm okay with taking some time to learn some lessons. And then you go to the Book of Mormon. I need to scatter this tree in order to save it.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:23:05 That's right. I don't wanna be these people. I wanna learn from them. I don't think I'm better than them, but I wanna learn from them. In what ways are we saying we wanna be like all the other nations? 'Cause we can look at history and be a little smug and condescending and like those dumb people, but it's for our benefit. I just wanna make sure that we're not doing the same thing. Are we in some ways doing that in different ways? And I wanna be open to that. That's what I like to ponder and think about. Scares me a little bit.
- Hank Smith: 00:23:40 How many times have I said, "I wanna be like everybody else." Some of my students have said there was a time in their life where like, I, why am I getting up at dark 30 every morning and going to Bible school and trying to find a different prom dress because I can't find one that fits our standard. I'm tired of saying I can't do that. And aren't you guys the people with the funny underwear? And forget it, I'll just be like everybody else. Not a good idea.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:24:08 And in terms of educational ideas and the way we teach, are we mimicking the world too much? By the way, it's a pivot point in

the historical books. I'm bringing this up because it's so important. You go from Samuel who was a mighty judge and a mighty prophet and they basically say, okay, we want a king now. And then the rest of the history is these rotten kings. Essentially, in the northern tribes, they're all off the track and in the southern tribe, you have a few standout great people. It's a difficult journey and every single thing that was prophesied to them and the warning did in fact come to pass.

- John Bytheway: 00:24:44 You said something right there that is also within this 800-year period because we said from Dan to Beersheba. At one point, all of the land was divided up among the tribes, but then you mentioned the divided kingdom, so that's like King Solomon era. There's 10 tribes in the North and kind of two in the South. And so that's within this whole story too, isn't it?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:25:07 It's within the story, but it's not happened yet. You got the loose confederation of tribes in the Book of Judges and you still have it in the Book of Samuel. The one thing that's uniting them in the Book of Samuel is Samuel. Samuel is the prophet who's recognized. Then they say we want a king and we're gonna get Saul. Then Saul's gonna be interesting, to put it mildly. Then Saul will get David and David is considered the king, but he will unite the tribes. Like that will actually happen. He spends some time in Hebron. Then he'll move to Jerusalem and they'll finally conquer the Jebusite people and he'll unite that whole area. And what we have to understand is that David is a warrior king. He is battle-hardened. He's also prophetic, but he's not the prophet. Then after David, of course, we get Solomon who again unites the kingdom and ends up getting the privilege of building the temple.
- 00:26:07 Once Solomon dies, that's when we divide northern tribes to southern tribes. That's all folded within this story.
- Hank Smith: 00:26:15 Hmm. I frequently tell to my students. Saul starts great, ends bad. David starts great, ends bad. Solomon starts great. Ends bad. And I say it's kind of like your dating life, isn't it? Ross, just one more question for those of us who are trying to connect the dots. Isn't this also the time period where Lehi fits in, like our Book of Mormon, doesn't it? Couldn't we stick it in here?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:26:40 Yeah, yeah. Oh, you can stick it into the historical books, but we're not quite there. We got Saul and then we got David and then we got Solomon. Then we're gonna break into our two tribes. Then we've got some time that's gonna happen with a whole series of Northern Kings and a whole series of Southern Kings overlapping. But like I said earlier, the, the Northern Kings

are woo, every single one of them is worshiping false gods and causing the people to do idolatry and other horrible things. The Southern tribes a little better. Now think about this. Isaiah is about 740 to 700 BC. It's during Isaiah's time, and I don't think a lot of people know this, when the northern tribes are taken captive. Around 721 or 722 BC, Isaiah prophesied of it and then saw it. That is amazing. Like that's incredible. He dies around 700 and about 100 years later, now Lehi leaves.

00:27:39 Then within a pretty short time, the southern kingdom is then taken as well. The Lehi story is embedded here, but not quite yet because we're still gonna have the kings. The next amazing thing that happens, so we've got the kings and the northern tribes and southern tribes. You don't have many northern prophets. A lot of times people read and they think, oh, everyone is the prophet to everyone. That's actually not totally accurate. Then you get Elijah and Elijah comes along. He is essentially to the northern tribes. He's prophesying one of the worst kings in the northern tribes, a guy named Ahab. He prophesies before Ahab, and I'm gonna talk a little bit about that later. Elijah's around 870 to 850, that we think, this 20-year ministry in the northern tribes, but he's a mighty prophet. Then I just brought up that the scattering of the northern tribes by Assyria, that'll happen in 2 Kings 17.

00:28:40 As you're going through, they're gonna get scattered. They're gonna get taken captive. Then the scattering of the southern tribes by Babylon, different empire. They overthrew the Assyrians. So now that's 2nd Kings 25. Then fascinating, you get the Persian empire and the return of the Jews under a King named Cyrus and the rebuilding of the temple. This exile lasts from around ... There's actually two mini ones that happened, one in about 597 right after Lehi left, then a kind of a final one in 586. And it goes all the way to 538, when they actually permit them to return. Then you have Jews returning, but a lot of Jews don't return. And in fact, Esther is a story about Jews that didn't return, that are still there. You can imagine that. You got a couple generations, you're living in a foreign country, maybe it's going well for you and you don't know anything about Jerusalem.

00:29:38 So the Lord, by the way this, Hank, to your point earlier, God's scattering to further his purposes and not everyone returns. Not everyone is coming back to build the walls of the temple. One of the questions I get asked all the time is, "Where's the ark? Where's the Ark of the Covenant?" The interesting thing is the ark disappears from the historical record after the Babylonian destruction. Once the Solomon's Temple is, we've left, we're,

we're gone, then we have no record of the ark. Including, when they come back. There's zero record of the ark coming back in the rebuilt temple. It's absolutely nonexistent in Herod's rebuilding of the temple right before Christ is born. It seems like after the Babylonian, the ark is lost to history. So, in terms of temple, if you're thinking about the temple, you've got the tabernacle, then Solomon is allowed to build this temple, which is this glorious, amazing thing that has the Ark of the Covenant.

00:30:37 Then it's kind of deteriorating through time and then by the time the Babylonian captivity, the exile there, then the ark is actually lost from history and we don't have an ark anymore in the Old Testament. Pretty interesting.

John Bytheway: 00:30:49 Is that biblical and extra biblical sources?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:30:53 Yep. They stop talking about it. And in fact, there are some extra biblical things where they're overtly mentioning that in the return, meaning, you know, Ezra and Nehemiah time, that there is no Ark of the Covenant. They keep the room, they put a veil there, but there's actually nothing inside of it, which is super sad. And I would suggest symbolizing--degrading. God hasn't left them completely, but it's pretty far down.

Hank Smith: 00:31:20 We've gotten through the story of Moses. We're gonna go into the promised land. Moses is like, let's go. Nope, not you. Joshua, you're going. They come in, we're back in the promised land. We're not doing so good in the Book of Judges. Okay, Samuel. Okay, we're doing pretty well. Actually, we'd rather have a king than God. Okay. Saul, David, Solomon, Kingdom splits in half. Now I've got 10 tribes in the North, two tribes in the South, which you're calling Northern Kingdom, right, Ross? And Southern Kingdom. Then throughout my reading over the next few months, those two are gonna keep going with Kings in each, Northern Kings, Southern Kings, prophets coming. Then this is about the time, the Northern Kingdom is about the time of Isaiah, the Northern Kingdom. Gone. Southern Kingdom remains though, which is pretty incredible. They're the smaller one. Isaiah dies, then that's about the time of Lehi.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:32:15 Isaiah dies about 700 BC.

Hank Smith: 00:32:17 About 100 years later, you said, here comes Lehi.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:32:20 Yep.

Hank Smith: 00:32:21 Then they're gone. And then you said King Cyrus of Persia is gonna say to some of these people, go home. Go home, go rebuild your city. Rebuild your walls. That's Ezra, Nehemia time. Then Esther time.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:32:38 Esther's in Persia, just so we know. The way you just laid it out is exactly right. Cyrus, by the way, is not a former day saint. Not a Latter-day Saint. Cyrus, according to Josephus, okay, so whatever you think of Josephus, he's gonna suggest that the Jews basically go to Cyrus and show him the Isaiah scroll and say, look, Isaiah talked about you. He's like, no way. And looked at it and basically said that you were gonna let the Jews go back. According to Josephus, he's so excited about that he in fact feels inspired and motivated to do that. Protects them, funds them, makes out royal decrees and edicts that they're protected. Fascinating idea, that Cyrus is motivated and inspired by Isaiah's prophecy uttered 200 years before.

Hank Smith: 00:33:32 Ross, I think where Latter-day Saints--I have and at least those I know have--get a little lost is after Lehi breaks off we don't really spend much time here. We kind of come back 600 years later and go, hey, look, Jesus' here and the Romans are in charge and we really don't ask any questions. Like, what happened after Lehi leaves?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:33:53 Okay, good. Two things though. Sometimes I've had kids go, "Is Lehi being too hard on the people in Jerusalem?" 'Cause Leman and Lemuel are like, no, they're a righteous people. If you wanna know, I think it's a fascinating thing for somebody to do is to read Jeremiah, say 1 through 20. You're gonna get a picture of Jerusalem that is not pretty. In fact, he says some things in there that are so disgusting about what's going on. Also, the blood being shed, the adultery, the idolatry, the corruption, it is a way more vivid wicked picture. Lehi gives us a little glimpse and then they leave. And some people are like, were they that bad? Oh no, they were that bad. They were that bad. The fact that God is being merciful and long suffering to them again shows the character of God wanting to work with them.

00:34:43 That's number one. Now to your question, when they leave, obviously, we know about Lehi and his group. The Jerusalem stays around, but there's like a mini captivity in the kings and then by 586, it's like gone. So, okay, we're gone, we're there in Babylon, then we come back under Cyrus. We've got that situation in Ezra and Nehemiah and then that ends and then we go into a period where it's not scripture, but historically we have the Greeks coming in and then later you're gonna have a little period of time called the Hasmoneans. These are gonna be

Jewish people. They're gonna rise up--the Macabees and that's not gonna really last too long. And then eventually Rome comes in. Rome comes along about 64 BC. They become the empire that rules and controls. That is the setting for Jesus. You've got hundreds of years of Persia, then you've got the Greeks, then you've got some period of, I'll call it quasi-independence, and then you have Rome.

00:35:45 And that's the context for Jesus. Malachi, again, is gonna probably be way over in the fifth century with that intertestamental period, which a lot of scholars have written on, which I find to be actually very helpful, but that's that period which is extra biblical outside of the Bible.

Hank Smith: 00:36:01 For an ordinary book, I don't really wanna know how it's gonna go, but for the Bible, it's kinda nice to know how it's gonna go so I can look for it.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:36:08 Exactly. That's really good.

John Bytheway: 00:36:10 Ross, when was the last time then that Israel had its own king and wasn't just under some other empire? Was that with David?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:36:21 No Solomon is united Israel and united kingdom and like glory times and Queen of Sheba comes and visits and this is the glory times. And then like you said, Hank, started out great, ended bad. He ends up having alliance marriages and then those alliance marriages cause him to worship false gods. It becomes pretty ugly. Then the kingdom divides. The tribes in the north are generally denominated by the scriptures as Israel and the tribes in the South are generally denominated by the term Judah. Sometimes Isaiah will say in Judah and Israel, that has specific meaning. It's talking about the northern tribes and the southern tribes or the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. That's important to know. When it says Israel, it's not talking about all of Israel or the state of Israel. It's talking about the northern tribes. And when I say prophets of Israel, I'm talking about prophets in the northern kingdom.

00:37:21 And when I say prophets of Judah or the southern kingdom, that's down there about Jerusalem all the way down to the, to Beersheba. That's Judah. So, I think that's important to say.

Hank Smith: 00:37:31 Doesn't Isaiah call them Ephraim? Sometimes the northern kingdom?

John Bytheway: 00:37:34 Yeah. The dominant tribe.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:37:36 The dominant tribe, Ephraim, is the northern kingdom. Yep. Super important. A lot of people also don't realize that in terms of land inheritance, it's not just west of the Jordan river. It's also east of the Jordan river. That whole area, because Manasseh crosses over. Gad crosses over. Sometimes people think it's the state of Israel, currently, is the way the Old Testament Israel was. Well, that's not accurate either. Like the country of Jordan was a lot of that was included in the holy land, what President Nelson always called that whole area, the holy land. I'd like to now look at the frame of what I'm gonna call like key figures. Just pop through some key figures. And what I'd also like to do with this is highlight some key women figures, which we often don't do. Let's do first Joshua, just for a brief moment. Joshua, mighty prophet, I think most people know he was with Moses during the entire time that we know of in the wilderness, witnessed all of the miracles, he witnessed the manna, the whole thing. Joshua was there. And then Joshua's a mighty prophet to lead them into the promised land.

00:38:49 We love Joshua. And there's a couple of interesting things. I told you guys about the covenant renewal. Joshua recounts the story of the Exodus and he says this great line in, in Joshua 24:13, "...I have given you a land for which you did not labour, and cities which you built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat." I've loved that verse because that's my life. I didn't build my house. I didn't plant the wheat to eat the food, and I am so blessed. He's telling those people, you guys are so blessed, but this verse could be us. Then he says, okay, here's the deal. Fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth. Put away the gods which your father served on the other side of the flood, or the other side of the river and in Egypt and serve ye the Lord. I know this happened a long time ago, but boy, I'll tell you it's so relevant.

00:39:50 That's me. I live in a land for which I did not labor and I'm in a city for which I did not build. I have food for which I did not plant, but I eat of it. God's just saying, look, I'm happy to give that to you. Put away your false gods and serve me. Then the famous line, and if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom you will serve. Do it now. And the people are like, "Yes, we love it. We're gonna do it. This is gonna be great." Then he's kind of sarcastic. In verse 19, Joshua said to the people, "...Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he's a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins." And the people are like, "Nay; but we will serve the Lord." They're like going back and forth.

Hank Smith: 00:40:32 We will, I promise.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:40:34 Joshua says, okay, "...Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses." So, it's this beautiful covenantal ceremony. They're going to go back and forth in this ancient way. And if I could just say a word about fearing the Lord and God being jealous, there's this cool, wholesome fear, like appropriate fear. Elder Bednar has talked about this, that I can fear God, I'm in awe, I have reverence, he is my God, Jesus atoned for my sins. There's an appropriateness to that. I don't know if I'm communicating it effectively, but it doesn't mean fear like Sebastian before King Triton.

Hank Smith: 00:41:14 Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:41:17 It's a love and a reverential kind of fear that puts God and our orientation towards him in a different light. Then the idea of a jealous God, I love the idea of God is jealous, and that's probably the better translation. Zealous for me. He has deep feelings for us. I want Him to be like zealous for my salvation and He is. I want Him to be concerned about us and he is. And I want Him to have passion about my salvation and He is. What if it was like, Hank didn't go to church today? And the Lord was like, yeah, that's cool.

Hank Smith: 00:41:52 Well, yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:41:54 No, I want plates flying in the air and glass breaking and people upset and I want the Lord like, yeah, wait, we're going after him. This idea of God being passionate for our salvation, it's beautiful. There's Joshua. Then we're going to go to a woman and this woman is actually quite incredible and brought up multiple times and that's Rahab.

00:42:18 People are thinking, wait, Rahab, Rahab. I've asked students this question, "Who's Rahab again?" They're like, uh. Story of Rahab, the spies come into Jericho. Remember? Joshua and all the people are camped out here. People in the land of the holy land have heard about what Israel has done. Their hearts are melting inside them. Anyway, so the spies get taken into Rahab's house. She hides them because people are like, we saw these two Israelites come in. She's like, no. She hides them, then she sends them away by the way, but she gets a promise. She says, protect us. I believe you guys. I believe who you, I believe in your God. I believe that your God is the God of the mighty God and I want to be protected. And they say, okay, put a scarlet line outside of your--because she's got a house on the wall.

- 00:43:05 You put a scarlet line out there. Then the spies say, bring all your family in your house and no one can leave. Like when the thing starts, don't leave your house. You leave the house, our promise doesn't matter, but if you guys stay in the house, you'll be protected. Now you think about the faith that would have taken. They're surrounding the city and blowing trumpets and the walls are falling down. You would like freak out. Like we have to leave the house and I have a feeling Rahab's in there going. Those guys promised me. Don't leave the house. Now this is very similar, John and Hank, to the Passover. The 10th plague. You go in your house, you shut the door, don't leave. If you leave, the promise is gone. She puts the scarlet outside like blood on the doorpost. Very similar. Don't leave the house.
- 00:43:54 Joshua himself is like, nope, she gets this promise. She gets this promise. Now here's what's fascinating about Rahab. By the way, she was a harlot. We don't know all the ins and outs of the story. We don't know all the circumstances, but the Hebrew word, it's pretty clear. The scriptures are pretty clear, but there's repentance. There is faith. There's change of lives. It's so beautiful because Hebrews chapter 11, verse 31, James chapter two, verse 25. Both Paul and James speak of Rahab as a great woman of faith. Two witnesses in the New Testament testify to the faith of Rehab. In Hebrews 11, that's Paul's pantheon of amazing characters and scriptures who exercise faith and Rahab's one of them. Now, here's the other one. In Matthew chapter one, Matthew only brings up a few women. One of them is Rahab who is an ancestress of Jesus Christ.
- 00:44:54 You talk about a story of hope. You talk about a story of change, of repentance, of not throwing in the towel, of believing in God's prophets, of believing in the character of God. She changes. She becomes a mighty, mighty woman, notwithstanding whatever her past might have been. I think it's amazing.
- John Bytheway: 00:45:11 In Matthew one, because I was just looking it up because I thought, is that the same? Is there a "c" in that, the way Matthew spells it?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:45:17 Yeah, so Matthew is not Hebrew, it's Greek and I think they're trying to say rachab. So, we gotta get our "ch" in there. Can I read this quote from President Kimball about women? He said, quote, "Much of the major growth that is coming to the church in the last days will become because many of the good women of the world will be drawn to the church in large numbers. This will happen to the degree that the women of the church reflect righteousness," and listen to this, "articulatness in their lives

and to the degree that the women of the church are seen as distinct and different-- from the women of the world. Thus, it will be the female exemplars of the church will be a significant force in both the numerical and the spiritual growth of the church in the last days." Unquote. That's from teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, pages 222 and 223.

00:46:15 Now, President Oaks quoted that and President Nelson quoted that. Then President Nelson said, "The prophecy is being fulfilled today." That was around 2019. That's happening right now. Again, when I was thinking about what would be a fun way to go through the historical books, I thought one fun way to do it would be talk about the history, let's get the frame, let's make sure we understand what's going on, but then let's talk about some fun figures along the way. Joshua clearly is one. Rahab is, again, scripturally this powerful example. We talk about her in the church, but maybe not enough.

John Bytheway: 00:46:53 Earlier, you were mentioning how we can look at First Samuel 18 and go, these silly people, they wanted a king so that they could be like the nations. Then you ask that great question with humility. Well, do we ever do that? Here is President Kimball that you quoted and President Oaks and Nelson saying, we're trying to be distinct and different. We're not trying to be like the world. To the extent that we're distinct and different, that will draw people who want to know why. I'm glad you mentioned that. We don't want to be like the world. We want to be distinct and different.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:47:28 And I think about some of the women general officers of the church, Camille Johnson and Kristin Yee, Amy Wright, and Emily Bell Freeman who are articulate, brilliant, spirit-directed, powerful women who live in the world but not of the world and who are respected at the highest levels of business and law that are fulfilling this prophecy. It's a credit to them. It's absolutely incredible. My next one is Hannah. I don't know if we fully appreciate Hannah. In first Samuel one, we meet her. She's a plural wife, doesn't have any children. The first wife has some babies and is making fun of Hannah for not because they looked at that as divine disfavor. You know the story, Hannah goes up to the temple, she's praying and Eli thinks she's drunk.

Hank Smith: 00:48:21 I shouldn't laugh, but it always makes me laugh. You shouldn't drink this early.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:48:25 Yeah, you shouldn't drink this early. And she's like, and she kind of rebukes him and says, I'm not drinking. I'm here fasting because I want a child. Eli, in his capacity as high priest

prophesies to her, you're gonna have a baby. She ends up getting pregnant and she says, I'm gonna give this child to the Lord after he's weaned. The weaning is of whatever age that might've been back then. It's hard to kinda say somewhere between two and three or maybe even four. And she goes to Eli and basically gives the little boy. How difficult that must have been to be raised in the tabernacle, essentially and to become the mighty prophet that he became. When she gets pregnant in First Samuel chapter two, verses one through 10, it's this Psalm she essentially beautifully sings, or it's a poem she wrote, or she's inspired, or all three.

00:49:14 It's very similar to The Magnificat that Mary utters. When Mary meets with Elizabeth, you remember and Elizabeth says, "whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come...", bearing testimony of Mary. She said, as soon as I heard your voice, the babe in my womb leaped. John, inside the womb is excited to bear witness of Jesus Christ. She then goes into what's called The Magnificat, right? She then glorifies God and if you wanna compare, First Samuel 2 with this passage in Luke, where she is glorifying God at the end of Luke chapter one, they're very similar. I want to think that Mary grew up in a house where she knew the Bible. So, I think Hannah influenced the mother of the son of God in a powerful, powerful way so that she could give utterance to what she was feeling in her heart.

00:50:08 Back to President Kimball, articulateness. She was righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree the women of the church are seen as distinct and different. Mary loving what Hannah said and then bearing witness of it, that's a powerful one too. She's a beautiful part of the story and she gives birth to Samuel and that had to have influenced Samuel, who becomes this mighty, mighty prophet. Now I got another woman. This is somebody that Hank maybe people in our hallways talk about but not a lot of people talk about and that's Huldah. Now, Huldah was a prophetess. I was gonna bring up Deborah from the Book of Judges who was also a prophetess. Miriam, the older sister of Moses was a prophetess. In this case, Huldah, if you remember the story, Josiah is a good king. They do some cleaning in the house of the Lord and they find the book of the law of the Lord.

00:51:07 They read it to Josiah and Josiah rends his garments and says, oh my word, we need to repent. His heart is soft. He listens to it. He's like, we're gonna do what's inside that book. Then he goes, go to Huldah. She's got the gift of prophecy. Huldah basically says, this is Second Kings chapter 22, 15-20. She

basically says, Josiah, because your heart is tender, because you've been a good man, God is gonna bless you and you're not gonna see the captivities gonna happen, but after you, it's gonna be kind of a disaster. And it was. I wanna bring up Huldah because this idea of the gift of prophecy. Do you remember in Numbers chapter 11, Moses is so upset and he's like, I can't do anymore, Lord. I'm done. And the Lord's like, okay, bring people in the camp. I'm gonna put my spirit on ... You remember the story, like, the 70.

00:51:58 And they come into the camp, they start prophesying, and then Joshua's like, Lord, forbid, don't let them prophesy. And he says, would that all the Lord's people were prophets? And it's not would that all the Lord people were the presidents of the church. That's not what he's saying. He knows he's got that role. He's saying would that all the Lord's people had the gift of prophecy. President Nelson in 1989 said, quote, "Gifts of the Spirit and testimonies of the truth are bestowed regardless of gender." Boyd K. Packer said, "There is no gift of the Spirit that it has to do with gender." They're gender neutral. Deborah, Miriam, Huldah and others have the gift of prophecy. What a blessing. What a blessing. Josiah recognized it and said, hey, go to Huldah because she's gonna prophesy. Some people get, I guess, uptight about that, no need. Huldah wasn't trying to be the president or trying to assert anything inappropriate.

00:52:57 She had the gift of prophecy and she used it. So, we had Joshua, got Rahab, we've got Hannah, we had Samuel from Hannah. We've talked about Samuel. Huldah. And then I want to talk about Elijah. Okay. So, Elijah, this is a northern kingdom prophet, house of Israel. Interesting mission that he has. If you were in premortality and the Lord was like, you are hereby called to serve in the northern kingdom during the reign of Ahab. Right on. I've always wanted to do that. Oh, okay. So, he comes down, it's a rough mission. There's rampant wickedness. Ahab and his wife are woo, two of a kind. He just comes on the scene. Just boom, comes on the scene in Second Kings 17. Elijah the tishbit, okay? We don't totally know what that means, who is inhabitants of Gilead. We know where that is.

00:53:43 Said unto Ahab, in this line, this is powerful. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand," wow, "there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Okay. I always stop here. Let's look at this text. This idea before whom I stand, it's an interesting Hebrew phrase. Lifne Adonai is before the Lord, and Lifne Adonai generally has an idea of temple or holy presence. So, when he says, "Before whom I stand," he's kind of boldly saying, I have the Spirit with me. I stand in the

presence of God. Remember when Gabriel shows up to Zacharias and says, I'm Gabriel who stands in the presence of God. Don't mess with me. I'm in the presence of God. And Elijah, to a certain degree, a mortal being saying, "The Lord before whom I stand, there shall not be..." And then he says, nor dew nor rain.

00:54:44 Now, you could prophesy nor rain in the holy land because there can be dry seasons, but they depend on dew. They depend on dew. He prophesies that even the moisture that would occur in the evening, the moisture that would occur naturally not gonna happen. This famine is gonna be so deep and that's part of his prophetic power. You know the story, he then leaves, he goes to Sidon and he ends up with a widow woman. Think these stories exemplify his power and his prophetic guidance. As she was going to fetch it because he goes to this widow woman, you guys remember the story and she's got a son and they're both gonna eat their last meal and die. Like we're gonna die. In comes Elijah and we all have different views of what Elijah might've looked like, but a little, you know, woo.

00:55:33 In comes Elijah and he says, go get me some food. This is verse 11. "And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her and said, Bring me ..." Now listen to this imagine this. You've got a widow and her son and the prophet says, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." It's gonna be our last meal. "And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son."

00:56:21 Wait, what? Doesn't this gentleman know that ladies go first? Doesn't he know that widows go first? Like what? He says, no, no, no. You give it to me first. "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel". Okay, so this is Elijah as bold as can be. "...The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." He then prophesied to her, "And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she...and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah." We have this period of time that we've talked about from Joshua to Esther, but interspersed are mighty prophets

and mighty women, God working with his people, sending them mighty prophets.

00:57:19 The prophet Joseph said about Elijah. Elijah was the last prophet that held the keys of the priesthood and who will, before the last dispensation, restore the authority and deliver the keys the priesthood in order that all the ordinances may be attended to in righteousness. Why send Elijah? Joseph continues, because he holds the keys of the authority to administer in all the ordinances of the priesthood and without the authority, the ordinances could not be administered to in righteousness. That's the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 172. I wanted to just talk about that idea of a mighty prophet in the land, who holds keys, who holds authority and who makes bold declarations, but when followed, amazing miracles occur.

Hank Smith: 00:58:05 And when we see that in our day, don't be shocked. Don't be surprised that the prophet says something that goes against everything that culture says he can say.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:58:14 And everything that's appropriate or not politically correct or might even pinch you and I a little bit in the collar, when he says, this is what's going on.

00:58:23 He says to the widow, yeah, make it for me first. Okay, wait, what? I don't think I heard you right. Yeah, make it for me first and then thus saith the Lord. It's gonna happen this way. The last one I wanna talk about is Esther. The Book of Esther is an interesting book. The Book of Esther never mentions God. I think most people know that, but God is everywhere in the book. He's just not explicitly mentioned. I mean, he's in the background of the book and they're all, they're fasting and they're praying. God is not explicitly mentioned and some people are a little put off by that, but I think the Book of Esther is amazing. The Book of Esther is also the book from which we get the celebration of Purim. It's a holiday and we celebrate, again, God's miraculous deliverance via the hand of Esther because Esther is the woman who's the hero of the book.

00:59:14 Her parents apparently are dead. For sure, her dad is dead. She's raised by a relative, his name's Mordecai. And the interesting thing is he says this famous line in Esther four. We know the story. Esther becomes the queen of this area because the king was kind of a weirdo, but anyway, she becomes the queen. She's got to go, they find out there's this plot to kill all the Jews because they're not worshipping the way they want him to worship. I don't think the king knows she's a Jewess, but she is and she seems pretty unashamed about it. Mordecai says

this line, and this is Esther 4:14, "...and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" I've loved that verse. Sometimes when you're faced with a situation and you're starting to do something, whether it's a mission or a calling, who knoweth, but you were sent to the kingdom for such a time as this. To both your credit, and the Sorenson family, that the followHIM podcast to a large degree, it's such a time as this.

01:00:19 It's an interesting thing occurring in the kingdom. It's just one thing that the Lord is coordinating through. It doesn't have to be as big as what we might think. It's in whatever our circumstances. Let's take that and grab it and then follow the Holy Ghost. And in your sphere, President Uchtdorf, lift where you stand. Wherever you are, who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this. That's why you're here. Let's go. And here's my testimony, is that whenever you do that, whether you're the nursery leader or you're Hank and John leading followHIM, there is going to be a spirit to that that's going to buoy you up and give you peace and joy in whatever sphere you're doing. Esther probably wasn't known by anybody and not for years until the book was written, but she ended up becoming a deliverer.

01:01:09 She is a Christ type. She goes in it and she basically has to say, at the risk of her own life, this is the situation that's going on and I don't want it to go on. And it ends up saving the Jews. It ends up saving them. Esther, an amazing woman, distinct in who she was and articulate in what she did, playing off that idea of President Kimball.

Hank Smith: 01:01:33 And what did you call the holiday, the holy day?

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:01:37 Purim. P-U-R-I-M, Purim. Poor means lots. Like they cast lots and -im is plural. So, Purim is lots. It's a super fun holy day when you're a little Jewish kid because-you get to eat chocolate and we get to tell a story and then we hang the guy that was the bad guy. And it's fun. Oh yeah, it's really fun. He ends up dying and everyone's super happy. It's a great holy day. In the Israel, in the state of Israel, it's a big deal. Like it's a fun holiday. They make a big deal out of it and whether a secular Jew or not, there, people celebrate Purim. It's a great fun holiday. It was fun to go through, in the historical books, some of these women, Rahab and Hannah and Huldah and Esther --see the influence they had.

John Bytheway: 01:02:27 What our introduction said was it has these amazing stories in it. The line that I remember from Esther is the one that you

pointed out, that thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this, like God is playing this 3D chess in such an amazing way of putting people in places where they need to be. And we could come up with dozens of examples. I think we can all think, why am I here? Am I supposed to be? How can I help? How can I serve people in my sphere? Why was I put here now?

- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:03:01 I want people to understand too. It doesn't just mean great hero type people. It's wherever you're serving, wherever you might be, that the Holy Ghost will be with you, that you will carry out his work. And we might not see the outcome right away. It might not be the outcome we thought, but God is doing his work. And in section three of the Doctrine Covenants, remember the works and the designs and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to not. I wanna be part of the program and not somebody trying to frustrate the program.
- Hank Smith: 01:03:35 Quick question. As our listeners read through these historical books, if they're gonna focus in, I hope they do, they might run into some stories that are confusing. In fact, it says right here in the manual, "What do we do when we come across passages in the scriptures that seem troubling?" And we don't have to go through specific examples, but I know I'm gonna run into, like you said, Hannah is a plural wife. Oh, what do I do with that? I know Elijah is gonna do some things that I think, can he do that? Let's go slay the priests. What do you do when you run into something in the Old Testament that you're going, I don't know how to take that?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:04:14 I love the question. I tried to address that a little bit in our first episode, about my top 10 things and looking at it. And let me just kind of repeat similar things and maybe I'll add something. Number one, I think the Old Testament is super honest in that we have history and the history, and this is the important thing, is descriptive, not normative, meaning I can look at history and it's telling me what happened. It's not telling me I should do that. It's like, learn from this. Sometimes when Latter-day Saints read scripture, we think everything is normative, that the way they acted is the way I ought to act. I don't think that's correct. Hank, I love what you're saying. So, you're like reading in the Book of Judges. Oh, my word. There's some interesting stories. I think you have to say, okay, I'm reading this history of these people, these imperfect people and God is working with them and they're doing these things and I'm gonna learn a lesson from that, but that's descriptive, not normative.

01:05:12 That's not telling me how I ought to act. Number two, the other thing we talked about in that first episode was, these are ancient civilizations that's like traveling in a foreign land. Some of the things they say, some of the things they do, some of the way they act. If we are not fluent, language is super interesting. I'm gonna use this analogy. I actually don't believe you can fully understand another culture unless you're fluent in their language. I think you can get kind of the culture, but when you're fluent in that language, there's things you can get that you can't get any other way. We are non-fluent speakers of the ancient world. I think we can get peaks and glimpses, but there's some things we're just like, I'm befuddled. The best thing a teacher can do is say, I don't know. I don't know. It's descriptive.

01:06:00 It's telling us what happened. I can't fully answer it, and then don't make stuff up. Just let it be. It's okay. It's okay. We're human beings. We're imperfect. God's working with us. I don't know if I totally get that story. Well, but like you brought up Elijah. Elijah did, fill in the blank and you're like, yeah. Yeah, he did. And I don't know all the context and we have a little bit of a fragment of a story here, but let's look at the big picture. What am I to make of that? Well, I don't know. We can ... Let's withhold judgment on it. If you're not fluent in another language, I don't actually think you can fully get another culture. And there's little short-hand things I can say to Hank or to John that you get instantly because you're a native speaker. I think I've told this story before, but I'll tell it again.

01:06:45 It's fun. But when I got back from my mission, I worked with a Hispanic man from Mexico in this warehouse before I went, came up to BYU. His English was absolutely incredible, but we spoke Spanish pretty much the whole day because I had just got back from my mission. He spoke English too and he would say at the end of the day, he'd say, I'm so tired and sick of this day. I go, Sid, we don't say that. He's like, what do you mean? I was like, if you say we're tired and sick, that means you're tired and you're sick. But if you say you're sick and tired, that means you're frustrated. And he'd go, that's so stupid. I was like-

Hank Smith: 01:07:18 Sorry.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:07:19 Sorry, man.

John Bytheway: 01:07:19 Got to get the sequence right.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:07:21 Exactly. But isn't that interesting as a native speaker we instantly got that that would ... By the way, if he said that to

you, you know he wasn't a native speaker. You just know it. You might even say, are you okay? Do you need some like Advil? Ibuprofen?

- Hank Smith: 01:07:34 You're tired and sick? You should go home.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:07:36 I'm super frustrated. Okay, then you should say sick and tired, not tired and sick.
- Hank Smith: 01:07:39 You should swap.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:07:40 Because we're native speakers. We are, we're native speakers, and so we get that. I think we're not native speakers of the ancient world.
- Hank Smith: 01:07:48 That makes sense.
- John Bytheway: 01:07:49 I asked somebody on my mission in the Philippines this question and I had never thought about what if you--I mean, the question we say every day, how are you? How, what does, what does that mean? How, how I came to be? Uh- How are you? When I slowed down, I thought, that's a really strange metaphysical question. It relates. How are you? Well, I was born. Uh, let's see. How do I answer that?
- Hank Smith: 01:08:21 An intelligence? Embodied now?
- John Bytheway: 01:08:24 In English, we know that means how are you feeling today or is today a good day?
- Hank Smith: 01:08:29 It used to be, how do you do? And then it just- How do you? How, how are you?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:08:35 It's interesting. Everywhere I served in Argentina, they have like 25 different ways of saying, how are you and hello? And they're all funny like colloquialisms and idioms. Once you're there and you kind of get that, you're okay with it. But like you said, John, sometimes a, a new missionary will like literally be like, "Wait, what did they just say?"
- Hank Smith: 01:08:55 So Ross, the Old Testament is gonna have things like, hey, that was a piece of cake or break a leg or I'm feeling under the weather. And we're going, how can you possibly un- everyone's under the weather, right?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:09:06 No, that's right. And I love what you're saying because sometimes people will criticize, sometimes a statement in the

Old Testament or the way they're saying something, but we have the most bizarre sayings. Just bizarre. And so, I'll say it again, we're just not fluent in the ancient world. We are all first-year speakers. Even, I would even suggest people that do archeology might have a little more of a glimpse, but still not fluent. There's only one really way to be fluent and that's to immerse yourself in that particular place.

- Hank Smith: 01:09:33 Yeah. Be raised there. Yeah.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:09:34 We don't have that option. When you ask me like, what do you do with troubling passages? I say, number one, it's descriptive, not normative, and number two, just realize there's cultural things going on I just don't understand.
- John Bytheway: 01:09:47 I would love to spend another minute talking about descriptive, not normative. Okay? They're describing, they're reporting what happened. They're not saying; therefore, you should behave this way. It's kind of like when you watch the news, the news is reporting what happened, not saying, now, we all need to behave like this. That would be normative.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:10:05 Be weird. Yes, exactly.
- John Bytheway: 01:10:06 So yeah, it's just saying this is what happened.
- Hank Smith: 01:10:09 And even the good guys, right, Ross? Even the guys who are like, oh, this is the good guy. You don't have to do what he does.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:10:15 That's exactly right because the good guy, because what they do in the Old Testament is the good guy, they have a span of his life, he's generally approved by God and occasionally does some things that we think, again, two or 3,000 years later are weird or inappropriate and then we try to explain it. Sometimes when we try to explain it, it falls flat because we just don't know. And I think sometimes it's okay to say, you know, I don't totally know. Here's some ways to look at this, but I don't know. And I think that's totally okay.
- Hank Smith: 01:10:48 I'm trying to think of things today that we might write that people a thousand years, 2,000 years would be like, wait what? He bit the bullet?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:10:55 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 01:10:56 That's awful.

John Bytheway: 01:10:56 He bought the farm. Uh, he ...

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:10:59 Isn't that good? He bit the bullet. That's bad. He bought the farm. That's good.

John Bytheway: 01:11:02 That sounds good. You could afford it. That's awesome.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:11:06 And scholars are writing these lengthy articles about buying the farm and how important it is to buy the farm.

Hank Smith: 01:11:11 Yeah. He made it by the skin of his teeth. They're like, well, how they measured things in the ancient world was by the skin on their teeth.

John Bytheway: 01:11:19 They didn't brush a lot back then, so they ...

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:11:22 The elephant in the room, I said that today, right? Well, the elephant in the room, and they're like, wait, there was an elephant in the room?

Hank Smith: 01:11:28 That can't be a true story.

John Bytheway: 01:11:31 In every room.

Hank Smith: 01:11:32 That's anachronistic.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:11:33 That's anachronistic. How did they say anything about elephants? I remember when we went to Jericho in 2018, we had some archeologist guys saying, they found rice and this is unquestionably, this would have been the kitchen. Then a year later, we went and there was a new guy and he was like, we found rice here-unquestionably. Unquestionably the storage area outside the palace. I was like, interesting.

Hank Smith: 01:11:59 Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:12:00 Interesting.

Hank Smith: 01:12:01 Unquestionable.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:12:01 Unquestionably. Unquestionably.

John Bytheway: 01:12:04 Okay, Ross, thank you. That was a whirlwind trip. That was a, like, some greatest hits of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Kings, Samuel, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. So, I hope people are looking forward now to going through and getting some more

specifics on each one. And you, you did that perfectly because that was 800 years of time we discovered.

- Hank Smith: 01:12:26 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 01:12:27 'Cause we're fast here at followHIM. Next time we have Ross on, we are going to do, and Jesus Will Say to All Israel, "Come home." And that sounds, yeah, come home. That's gonna be interesting. What is that about?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:12:43 Gathering, and we're gonna fold some of the prophetic books into that idea.
- Hank Smith: 01:12:48 It might be something President Nelson might enjoy. It might be right up his alley. That was another idiom. Uh-
- John Bytheway: 01:12:57 Right up his alley.
- Hank Smith: 01:12:59 But Ross, I mean, this will be the gathering, right? Yeah. Jesus will say to all Israel, "Come home."
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:13:04 The neat thing about a lot of the prophetic books is the prophesied gathering. Joseph would say they had their eye on this dispensation where all things would be gathered together in one in Christ. It's gonna be extremely, I think, insightful. I think it'll open people's eyes to the power of these prophets who lived so long ago but saw our day. This idea of Jesus, through them saying, "It's time for Israel to come home."
- Hank Smith: 01:13:34 Ross, when you said earlier, let's look at this through the lens of the Abrahamic Covenant. I have found when the more someone understands the Abrahamic covenant, their questions, they fade. Some of their deep doubts and questions go, oh, oh, that actually makes perfect sense now.
- John Bytheway: 01:13:50 Yeah.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:13:50 Exactly. You know, how you said, how do you handle some of the troubling passages? Again, if you keep this framework of the lens of the Abrahamic Covenant, some of those troubling passages are, oh, oh, got it. That's what was going on. They're rejecting these things. God has to act a particular way. He's teaching them and it can be harsh sometimes, but it's gotta be what happens. That's how we learn.
- John Bytheway: 01:14:13 That's super helpful to frame your teaching around those things. Abrahamic Covenant and what are we need to learning about

the nature of God, his patience, mercy, long suffering is, yeah, mercy. I love it.

- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:14:25 And then let me just say, I'll say my last word, I guess. In teaching the Savior's way, the first bullet is essentially no matter what you teach, teach about Jesus Christ from Joshua through Esther. I think we have to bear witness again of the character of God and that Jesus is meeting them where they are and inviting them to go higher and he wants to bless them in every way possible, but it's hard sometimes with what they're doing
- Hank Smith: 01:14:55 Without taking away their agency.
- John Bytheway: 01:14:57 Right.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:14:57 That's right. That's exactly right. Without taking away their agency.
- Hank Smith: 01:15:00 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 01:15:01 Well, this has been great, Ross. Thank you so much. We're excited to have you back for the next one. And if you ever read the biography of Ross or Hank or John, remember those are descriptive, not normative.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:15:13 And you're not fluent in John Bytheway. You're not fluent in John Bytheway
- Hank Smith: 01:15:17 You have to know him really well to understand.
- John Bytheway: 01:15:20 Not at all normative. The normal has never been used to describe me, so.
- Hank Smith: 01:15:24 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 01:15:25 Thank you for joining us. We'll see you next time on another episode of followHIM.