



"A New Spirit Will I Put Within You"
Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

followHIM: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Wednesday.

Podcast Episode Description

What if God's throne room could move on wheels, covered in eyes, and show up for you in the middle of exile? Dr. Matthew Grey joins Hank and John to unpack Ezekiel's wild chariot-throne vision, his dung-fueled bread and other prophetic object lessons, and why the historical and temple context turns this bizarre book into a message of hope.

Timecodes:

- **00:01:19** Meet Dr. Matt Grey (and Hank and John's modeling careers)
- **00:03:26** Why Ezekiel gets overlooked and how to read it in context
- **00:08:02** Matt's background, A Place Called Gethsemane, and Picturing Christ
- **00:11:20** Being a faithful Latter-day Saint in biblical scholarship
- **00:15:14** Ezekiel's background: born into a priestly family, Zadokite lineage
- **00:17:11** Ezekiel's 30th year and the exile questions he's wrestling with

- **00:20:39** Why Ezekiel sees things through a priestly lens
- **00:23:07** How the book of Ezekiel is organized
- **00:26:21** "What did it mean to them?" Asking the context question first
- **00:30:17** Ezekiel 1: The wild chariot throne vision
- **00:35:33** Connections to Isaiah 6, Revelation, and Lehi's vision
- **00:39:32** The Holy of Holies on wheels: God goes into exile too
- **00:44:41** Applying it: when life doesn't go the way you planned
- **00:47:56** The dome, the firmament, and a scale model of the universe
- **00:52:11** Ezekiel 2-3: Eating the scroll
- **00:57:16** Oracles of judgment and prophetic object lessons
- **01:00:16** Lying on his side for 390 days and the dung bread negotiation
- **01:05:14** Ezekiel 8-11: The defiled temple vision
- **01:09:37** Marked foreheads and the angels of destruction
- **01:11:20** The heavenly Harley: God's glory leaves Jerusalem
- **01:14:02** Chapters 33-39: The turn to hope and restoration
- **01:15:46** The valley of dry bones and the two sticks
- **01:18:08** Joe Spencer on how to read the stick of Judah and Joseph
- **01:22:10** Gog and Magog, and reading Ezekiel responsibly
- **01:26:58** Ezekiel 40-48: The vision of the new temple
- **01:31:12** A guided tour of Ezekiel's temple
- **01:40:33** Why the sanctuary is empty and God's glory returns
- **01:42:06** The river of life that heals the Dead Sea
- **01:45:52** "The Lord is there": How the book ends
- **01:47:34** Ezekiel's temple vs. Isaiah's house of prayer for all nations
- **01:49:24** How the Gospel of John draws on Ezekiel to portray Jesus
- **01:55:16** Wrap-up and reflections
- **01:58:09** Closing thanks and credits

Sources:

OT245B Dr. Matthew Grey: Ezekiel — Sources

Mary Richards, "Learning from Different Versions of the Bible," *Church News*, December 21, 2025, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/members/2025/12/21/learning-from-different-bible-translations-and-versions>.

Matthew J. Grey, “What Did the Last Supper Really Look Like?,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Spring 2026, <https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/article/what-did-the-last-supper-really-look-like/>.

Matthew J. Grey and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, *A Place Called Gethsemane: Seeing the New Testament Story and Site in Its First-Century Context* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2025), <https://www.deseretbook.com/product/6074789.html>.

Daniel Becerra, Jennifer Champoux, Mark D. Ellison, and Matthew J. Grey, *Picturing Christ: Understanding Depictions of Jesus in History and Art* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2026), <https://www.deseretbook.com/product/6087825.html>.

Come, Follow Me—For Home and Church: Old Testament 2026 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2026), “November 2–8: ‘A New Spirit Will I Put within You’: Ezekiel 1–3; 33–34; 36–37; 47,”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/come-follow-me-for-home-and-church-old-testament-2026/45?lang=eng>. “Ezekiel was a prophet in exile.”

Joseph M. Spencer, “The Sticks of Judah and Joseph: Reflections on Defending the Kingdom,” in *They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Charles Swift and Nicholas J. Frederick (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2022), 303–26, <https://rsc.byu.edu/they-shall-grow-together/sticks-judah-joseph>.

Dallin H. Oaks, “Preparation for the Second Coming,” general conference address, April 2004, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2004/04/preparation-for-the-second-coming>.

Hank Smith and John Bytheway, *Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (followHIM), <https://followhim.co>.

David Rolph Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, and Matthew J. Grey, eds., *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), <https://rsc.byu.edu/book/ascending-mountain-lord>.

Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges, eds., *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center,

Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015),
<https://rsc.byu.edu/book/approaching-antiquity-joseph-smith-ancient-world>.

Biographical Information:



Dr. Matthew Grey is a professor of ancient scripture and the coordinator of the ancient Near Eastern studies program at Brigham Young University. He received a B.A. in Near Eastern studies from Brigham Young University (1999–2003); an M.A. in archaeology and the history of antiquity from Andrews University (2003–2005); an M.St. in Jewish studies (with an emphasis on Judaism in the Greco-Roman world) from the University of Oxford (2005–2006); and a Ph.D. in ancient Mediterranean religions (with a major emphasis on archaeology and the history of early Judaism and a minor emphasis on New Testament studies) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2006–2011).

Before being hired in BYU's Department of Ancient Scripture, Dr. Grey taught Latter-day Saint Institute of Religion courses at the University of Notre Dame, the University of Oxford, and UNC-Chapel Hill/Duke University. Since being hired at BYU, he has taught courses on the New Testament gospels, the second half of the New Testament, the life of Jesus in its Jewish context, temples of the biblical world, and the archaeology of New Testament Palestine. During the 2017–2018 academic year he taught Near Eastern history and archaeology courses at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies; in 2025 he co-directed the winter study abroad program at the BYU London Centre; and he is currently an Alcuin Fellow with the BYU honors program.

For over twenty years, Dr. Grey has been actively involved in archaeological research relating to the world of the Bible in Israel, Jordan, and Italy. Since 2011 Dr. Grey has supervised excavations at the Roman-era village and synagogue at Huqoq (in Israel's Galilee region); in 2017–2018 he was an associate research fellow at the William F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research in Jerusalem; and since

2020 he has been a founding co-chair of the Archaeology of Roman Palestine program unit of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Dr. Grey's research on various biblical, historical, and archaeological topics appears in volumes published by Oxford University Press, Brill, De Gruyter, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, the Israel Exploration Society, and Fortress Press, as well as in articles published in the *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, the *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting*, the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, the *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, *Revue de Qumran*, the *Review of Biblical Literature*, and *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

Research Interests: Jesus and his Jewish Setting; Archaeology and the Material Culture of Roman Palestine; Judeans and Jesus Followers in the Roman World; Sacred Space in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity; Jesus in Film; 19th Century Exploration of the Holy Land; Hebrew Studies among the Early Latter-day Saints

Fair Use Notice:

The *Follow Him Podcast with Hank Smith and John Bytheway* may make use of copyrighted material, the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright holder. This constitutes a “fair use” and any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this podcast is offered publicly and without profit, to the public uses or the internet for comment and nonprofit educational and informational purposes. Copyright Disclaimer under Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976, allowance is made for “fair use” for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research. In such cases, fair use is permitted.

No copyright(s) is/are claimed.

The content is broadcast for study, research, and educational purposes.

This falls under “Fair Use” guidelines: www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html.

Note:

The *Follow Him Podcast with Hank Smith and John Bytheway* is not affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nor Brigham Young University. The opinions expressed on episodes represent the views of the guest and podcasters alone. While the ideas presented may vary from traditional understandings or teachings, they in no way reflect criticism of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day leaders, policies, or practices.



Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:00:03	These two sticks are coming back together. When that happens, you start to see the rumble in the valley. All of a sudden, all those dry bones start coming back to life. The way they come back to life, it is a really interesting description. It's like he sees the organs and the guts, then the sinews, and then the skin starts flapping on it. Seeing these skeletons literally come back to life. Next thing you know, they're standing there as this mass of beautiful humanity. It's resurrected Israel.
Hank Smith:	00:00:34	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I am your host. I am here with my co-host, John Bytheway, who is full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. John, I'm reading Ezekiel 28, and the Lord says to the king of Tyre, he says, "Oh, you were so great at one time." That's not you, John. That part doesn't apply to you. He said, "You were so great at one time. You were the perfect example. You're full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." And I thought if I was going to look up full of wisdom and perfect in beauty in the dictionary, there'd be a picture of John Bytheway.
John Bytheway:	00:01:10	Hank, I have an optometrist that I'd like you to meet. She's at Walmart. She could do a good job. I have turned down so many modeling contracts in my life.
Hank Smith:	00:01:19	John, we are privileged today to have someone who is also full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. His name is Dr. Matthew Grey. I just call him Matt because he's a close friend of mine. Matt, welcome back to followHIM.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:01:31	Oh, thanks, Hank. It's great to be with both of you.

Hank Smith:	00:01:33	Matt and I have been friends for many, many years. We work on BYU's campus together. He is a great, great soul. Excited to have you back.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:01:41	Yeah, I'm so thrilled to be back. I think this is the third time on the show in the last few years. I'm always excited to get the call.
Hank Smith:	00:01:48	Yeah. And John, we bring Matt on for some difficult books. I was just thinking about it today in preparation. I think we had him for Leviticus and for the book of Hebrews . These are difficult books. I don't know if there's a more difficult book to understand in the New Testament at least than the book of Hebrews. And now we're in Ezekiel, which I wouldn't say is easy.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:02:08	I am just enough of a Bible nerd that these actually are some of my favorite books of the biblical texts. Really happy to come on and talk about these things.
Hank Smith:	00:02:16	That's what we needed. John, when you think of Ezekiel, what do you think of? It gets, I don't want to use the word strange, but it definitely gets a little visual.
John Bytheway:	00:02:25	I learned four years ago, I mean, it was helpful to me that Lehi, we all know Lehi was saying Jerusalem's going to be destroyed and he'll be carried away captive. What's fascinating is Ezekiel was one of them who was carried away captive. He does this prophesying from another place, which is interesting to me just to help everybody with the storyline. Where's Ezekiel speaking from? And God can have prophets in Babylon if he wants. And the other thing, like you said, was some of the visions he has, like the wheel and the dry bones and there's some, wait, what? So I'm glad we've got a Bible nerd with us to help us understand this stuff.
Hank Smith:	00:03:04	We do have the perfect man for this. John, I'm with you. In the Bible video in my head, I picture Ezekiel looking over his shoulder and he sees a big caravan of people moving away and he's saying, "Oh, there goes Lehi. I wonder what his life's going to be like. I'm facing my own future." Matt, what do you want to do today as you've been preparing for this lesson? Where do you want to go?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:03:26	Well, first of all, I have to say I really am excited to look through the book of Ezekiel. This is one of those books that I

feel just does not get enough attention, partially because of the reasons you guys just described. There's a lot of really bizarre imagery and really unique symbolism. It doesn't take too long when you're reading it before, as a modern reader, you just start drifting and you have no clue where you're at. And so there's probably a reason why we relegate it to one week of the Sunday school curriculum. I think Isaiah gets what, a full month maybe. And it's one of those corners of the Bible that we have a sense that there are some interesting things. Every now and then I'll hear somebody say, "Well, that Ezekiel 34 chapter about the Lord being the shepherd of Israel, that's really cool." Or sometimes we'll maybe go out and cherry-pick a few verses from Ezekiel 37 about how the two sticks kind of sounds like the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:04:13	And maybe the last days enthusiasts among us, anytime things get a little tense in the Middle East, they quickly turn to Ezekiel 30, oh, maybe is this Gog and Magog? But really it's just a little selective here and there, and that tends to be our experience with Ezekiel. But I'm really excited to walk through this book together because there's so much richness within these 48 chapters. Understanding those chapters in their historical context makes a huge difference. Out of context, these images feel bizarre and so unrelatable, but within the context of an Eastern ancient Mediterranean world, ancient near Eastern world, these symbols really are very meaningful and the messages that Ezekiel has tend to be very, very profound. I think that it's really essential to start with understanding the world in which Ezekiel functions, the background, then actually reading through the entire book is also essential.
-------------------	----------	---

Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:05:05	Rather than just selectively choosing a verse here and a verse there, being able to read Ezekiel in context and then reading it from beginning to end, you really begin to see the message, you begin to see the overall vision that Ezekiel has. That's a really great way to spend our time together is going through the main sections of the book. Obviously today we won't be able to do every chapter, but at least trying to see the larger narrative arc in context can really help us to appreciate some powerful theology that's developing in ancient Israel, theology and thinking about the temple, about the nature of God's presence, about the nature of an exiled people and why this happened to us. I mean, all sorts of things are baked into this text. The final thing I'll say about it is after we go through the entire book to the extent that's possible, you also start to sense that
-------------------	----------	---

Ezekiel provided us with this rich vocabulary that later biblical writers will heavily draw upon.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:05:58 For example, you're going to encounter a similar challenge with the Book of Revelation in the New Testament. I don't know the percentage, but I would say a pretty significant percentage of the Book of Revelation is reworked Ezekiel. If you understand how Ezekiel used these images in his context, then you can see how later biblical writers keep going back to Ezekiel's visions, to his symbolism, and that has, I think, a really nice connection between Old and New Testaments. I'm just really excited to explore as much of that as we can within the time that we have.
- Hank Smith: 00:06:27 I was going to say that exact thing I have heard before. If you want to understand the Book of Revelation, you better know your Old Testament, especially Ezekiel. Those of you who are thinking, "Wait, I want to understand the Book of Revelation," it starts back here in the Old Testament, especially, especially this book.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:06:41 I do think it's worth taking our time, slowing down a little bit, and really digging into this extraordinary text. Even if we don't have as much time to talk about it in Sunday school, I would hope that at least in our personal study, we would follow the church's [recent council](#) and get a good modern English translation. That'll help with some of the bizarre symbols. They're even more bizarre if they're read in 17th century Jacobian English. Being able to read a more modern English translation can be really helpful. Also, as the church suggested recently, get a good study Bible. A good study Bible will give you some really helpful introductory materials, some really great footnotes, so when things get a little bizarre, let the scholars help us through some of those ideas, some of those aspects. Really taking the time to do that can make this book a really good friend of ours in the Bible.
- Hank Smith: 00:07:24 I keep coming back to that story in Acts, John, where the man is reading the book of Isaiah. Someone says, "Do you understand what you're reading?" He said, "No, I need someone to guide me." I love having scholars available, especially my friends like Matt who I say, "Matt, come over here and guide me. I don't understand." Now, I know Matt well and I adore him. John, but there might be someone out there who's like, "Wait, who is this?" Kind of the Indiana Jones, you might say, of the Latter-day Saint movement. In

fact, I think he has a hat that he wears when he goes out doing digging.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:07:57 I left it in my office after I snuck out the window.

Hank Smith: 00:08:01 John, tell us about Matt.

John Bytheway: 00:08:02 Well, Hank, once again, you got the right guy. His excitement for Ezekiel already is overflowing. Dr. Matthew Grey is a professor of ancient scripture and the coordinator of the Ancient Near Eastern Studies Program at Brigham Young University. He received a bachelor's in Near Eastern Studies from BYU, a master's in archeology and history of antiquity from Andrews University, and a master's in Jewish studies with an emphasis on Judaism in the Greco-Roman world from the University of Oxford, that sounds cool, and a PhD in ancient Mediterranean religions with a major emphasis on archeology and the history of early Judaism and a minor emphasis on New Testament studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Before that, he taught Institute of Religion courses at the University of Notre Dame, the University of Oxford, and also at Chapel Hill.

John Bytheway: 00:08:55 For 20 years, Dr. Grey has been actively involved in archeological research relating to the world of the Bible in Israel, Jordan, and Italy. Since 2011, Dr. Grey has supervised excavations at the Roman era village and synagogue at Hukok, and they sell Hukok Zero there too. In 2017 and 2018, sorry, he was an associate research fellow at William F. Albright Institute for Archeological Research in Jerusalem. I wanted to tell you something awesome about Matt. I am a subscriber to Biblical Archeology Review. On the front cover here, you can see it says Searching for the Last Supper. And look at this, Hank. Here's an article called What did the Last Supper Really Look Like by, you guessed it, [Matthew J. Grey](#). It was so fun to see this, Matt. I just thought, yes, go Matt. This is so cool. In fact, I think I texted you and said, way to go.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:10:00 You did. I really appreciate that. Thank you for the very kind introduction.

Hank Smith: 00:10:04 Now, John, Matt's been working on a couple projects the last two years. What are those?

John Bytheway:	00:10:09	Yeah, a couple of books, A Place Called Gethsemane , which came out in 2025, and another book called Picturing Christ , which is this year. Is that right? Do you want to tell us about those and our listeners?
Hank Smith:	00:10:20	Yeah, I'd love to know more about those.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:10:23	Sure. Yeah, just really quickly, I'll mention that the first one, <i>A Place Called Gethsemane</i> , is a book that I co-authored with our good friend and colleague, Richard Neitzel Holzapfel. It just looks at the history, the scriptural accounts, and then the archeology of the location of Gethsemane. I think it's a really fun exploration of the Gethsemane story in its first century context. And then the second project was also a collaborative co-authored book called <i>Picturing Christ</i> , where myself and three other colleagues, Daniel Becerra, Mark Ellison, and Jenny Champoux all worked on a project that just looked at different depictions of Jesus over the centuries, artistic depictions and how we can learn and be more of an informed viewer, more carefully engaged with that kind of art. And my modest contribution to that project was the first chapter looking at how can we envision the historical Jesus based on historical and archeological sources of what we know Jewish men look like in the first century Eastern Mediterranean world this upcoming year as we look at the New Testament, hopefully they'll continue to be relevant and interesting and helpful.
Hank Smith:	00:11:20	Matt, just real quick before we jump into Ezekiel, I hate to slow us down, but I want to ask you something. I've known you for a long time. A lot of people in the church, I don't think they know that there is a world out there called biblical scholarship. You might be surprised to find out that there are Protestants and Catholics and atheists who work in biblical scholarship, and Matt is in that world as a faithful Latter-day Saint. He is at the top of his class, you might say, in that world. What's that like, Matt, to be, here you are, a faithful, active Latter-day Saint in this world? How do you navigate that?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:11:56	That's a good question. Thanks for asking. To be honest, I actually have never seen that as a major challenge. There are challenging issues that come up and things that you need to wrestle with and really sit with and that might challenge and help you to rethink some of your assumptions perhaps, but my colleagues have always been extraordinary. I've always felt welcomed within the

academic community. My advisors all throughout grad school and my colleagues on archeological excavations, they've all known that I'm a Latter-day Saint, and I've never once felt that that somehow marginalized me. I just can't say enough good about my colleagues who... I think we're all so committed to the shared project of understanding the ancient biblical past, that if we come with different faith perspectives, that's fine. I think we're all part of that larger project though. We all care about the Bible.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:12:41 We all care about the biblical world. I'll be totally honest, sometimes the challenge actually comes on the other side. When I come back to sometimes a church setting like a Sunday school setting or something like that, I say, "Well, here's how biblical scholars would view this very interesting, complex issue." And then you get some pushback saying, "Well, I don't know, you and your scholars." Sometimes it's actually even more challenging translating the scholarship in a Latter-day Saint context to show this is not a threat. As Latter-day Saints, we should be excited. We should be thrilled by any new perspective, any new insight, any new data point, any clarity that we can get on the biblical world. That's what biblical scholars do. So I actually love being a biblical scholar who is also a Latter-day Saint.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:16 Yeah, and you're good at it. John, I just had a conversation today. Two of my students came up afterwards. They had a question about the Book of Mormon and Isaiah. It's an interesting, difficult, complex question. They're both ancient Near Eastern studies majors. I said, "You have got some great role models over there on how to be a disciple scholar." I said, "For example, Dr. Matt Grey" and both of them. Oh, unbelievable guy. Fantastic. Has helped me so much, an outpouring. And that was just this morning. Matt, you're doing a great, great work. I hope I can be a Latter-day Saint that appreciates biblical scholarship rather than be threatened by it. When I've talked to you, I've never felt I've got to rethink my entire faith. No, never. It's just been wow moments. Wow, really? Wow. Exciting stuff.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:14:04 Well, thanks guys. Real great to be part of these conversations with you.
- Hank Smith: 00:14:06 We're grateful you are here. We're also grateful you are doing what you're doing where you're doing it. All right, John, should we jump into the [Come, Follow Me Manual](#)? The lesson this week, A New Spirit Will I Put Within You. "Ezekiel was a prophet in exile. Along with other Israelites,

he had been captured and sent to Babylon. In Jerusalem, Ezekiel would have been a priest serving in the temple. In Babylon, he was among them of the captivity, and he sat where they sat, hundreds of miles from the beloved house of God and with little hope of returning. Then one day, Ezekiel had a vision. He saw the glory of the Lord, not back in the temple at Jerusalem, but there in Babylon among the exiles. The wickedness in Jerusalem, he learned, had become so severe that God's presence was no longer there, and yet there's something hopeful about Ezekiel's message.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|--|
| Hank Smith: | 00:14:49 | Despite how far the covenant people had fallen, God had not totally abandoned them. If they would hear the word of the Lord, what was once dead could be revived. Their stony heart could be replaced with a new heart. In the future, the Lord would establish a new temple and a new Jerusalem, and the name of the city from that day shall be, the Lord is there." Beautiful. What a hopeful way to begin. Matt, how do you want to start? |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 00:15:14 | Yeah, I think that's a perfect introduction. Really nicely establishes some background, gives you an overarching view of the whole book. So maybe we could take a few short minutes and flesh that out just a little bit more, because I feel like the more rooted we are in the context of any biblical book, the more it comes to life, the more we can connect with it, and the higher our comprehension gets. Some of the manual highlights were really good. For example, the idea of when Ezekiel was born, we think the date was probably around 623 BC, and he was born in Jerusalem, just as the manual mentioned, that would've made him a contemporary of Jeremiah. And according to the Book of Mormon narrative, Lehi and the Lehi Sariah family. That's historically where we're at. He seems to have been born in Jerusalem. The point that I think is really important here and that will play out throughout the entire book of Ezekiel is that he was born into a priestly family. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 00:16:07 | That's going to be really, really interesting because priesthood in the Hebrew Bible or in ancient Israel, of course, was hereditary. You were made a priest because you were born into a priestly family. Ezekiel seems to have been born into a priestly family, possibly even a family of high priests that eventually got the title of Zadokites named after the high priest Zadok in the time of Solomon, meaning he was a part of a very prominent family of priests in Jerusalem, and he's growing up as a youth, as a young man, in a Jerusalem that was hotly contested, militarily contested |

by the Babylonians on the one side, the Egyptians on the other, and throughout Ezekiel's youth, the Babylonians would have first come to Jerusalem, would've first deposed the king in 605, set up a new king, Jehoiakim. Then Jehoiakim rebels within a very short period of time, and around the year 597 is when the Babylonians come and actually depose Jehoiakim, take him and several of the ruling families into one of the earliest waves of captivity into Babylon.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:17:11 And the city at this point only has a few years left on it before the Babylonians come and ultimately destroy it and the Jerusalem Temple. So Ezekiel is living right in that time period where there's so much happening. His world is very, so tumultuous. So the story of Ezekiel, the book of Ezekiel does begin with Ezekiel in Babylonian captivity. The way that the book opens, it's with Ezekiel sitting along an irrigation canal in Mesopotamia, along the Euphrates. It begins in the 30th year. I think that's really fascinating because that's not the 30th year of the exile, that's Ezekiel's 30th year, meaning his 30th birthday is the year that this book opens. He's in exile reflecting on his life, past life in Jerusalem, but what's significant about that year 30 for a priest is that that is the year that a priest would begin his priestly service in the Jerusalem Temple.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:18:08 For Ezekiel's birthday, as he's sitting in exile, he is doing some serious self-reflection on his life. This was not the life he expected to have. He expected as a kid to be serving at a high level in the Jerusalem Temple, to be performing the sacrifices, burning the incense, dressing in the priestly garments, performing that priestly mediation that connected God with Israel in the space where God's house existed, where God's presence existed. None of that is happening now because events simply overtook him and he's now in exile wondering about the theology of all of this. How do we explain this? How do we explain that the temple is going to soon be destroyed? How do we explain that priests are no longer able to, like me, are able to serve in the temple as he's having this serious theological reflection, that's how the book opens. It turns out that the book spans about 20 years of Ezekiel's life in exile, and that span of 20 years, that's exactly how long he would have served as a priest in the Jerusalem Temple.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:19:07 So according to the law of Moses, you serve as a priest from age 30 to age 50. Well, Ezekiel 1, Ezekiel's 30, and at the final vision and the end of the book, Ezekiel turns 50. So

that 20 years where he would have served as a priest, he's instead sitting in Babylon asking these really complex, hard theological questions about what does this mean and why did this happen? Why did God's presence ultimately leave the Jerusalem Temple? How could it have been destroyed and what does that mean for our relationship as a community with God? What does that mean for my role as a priest in the community? All of these really interesting theological wrestles are part of this book. For ancient Israelites, God was connected to his house in Jerusalem. What happens when that house no longer stands? What do we say about God's presence?

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:19:51 What happens when, can I connect? What happens when the priests who perform the sacrifices to connect me with the God of Israel are no longer able to perform those rituals? What happens then? These are really heavy theological questions that maybe don't land as hard for us today, but in an ancient Israelite setting, this would've been an existential wrestle for Ezekiel. And you really get a feel for that as he goes through the book, tries thinking about some of these really big questions. And the last thing I'll say about it that I think is really fun and kind of interesting is that the way that Ezekiel comes to terms with some of these questions is exactly as we would expect a Zadokite priest to do it. It is so clear as Ezekiel is using certain images and comes to certain conclusions that he is doing so with the lens, through the lens of a Zadokite priest who cares deeply about priestly things.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:20:39 You'll notice in the other prophets like Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah even, a lot of these questions come down to issues of social justice. We were not treating the marginalized well. We let poor people continue to be poor. We did not take care of the widows and the orphans and those who were disadvantaged and maybe that's what we need to rethink. We get a lot of that type of social justice reflection in the other prophetic writers of the Old Testament, not so with Ezekiel, not as much. With Ezekiel, it's more about did we defile the sanctity of the sanctuary by letting in something ritually unclean? Were things ritually purified correctly? Is that why the God of Israel left is because too many foreign elements were brought into the sacred space? These are exactly the concerns of Leviticus. These are exactly the concerns of priestly literature in the Old Testament that is deeply concerned about protecting the sanctity of the sanctuary through a system of ritual purity and keeping out certain elements.

Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:21:37	And it's seeing all of these theological questions through that priestly lens. Reading Ezekiel and Leviticus side by side, you can actually see how Ezekiel is trying to process these big questions.
Hank Smith:	00:21:49	Matt, I don't think you and I planned this, but four years ago you walked us through Leviticus .
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:21:54	Oh, it's poetic, isn't it? Yeah, exactly. And we talked about the ritual purity system, I think, where we talked about what does it mean to be ritually clean versus ritually unclean and how that protects the sanctity of the sanctuary.
John Bytheway:	00:22:05	Thank you for that idea of the context of wait, where is God? Because I mean, I've seen illustrations of the camp of Israel and what do they put in the center of the camp of Israel during their wanderings? They put the tabernacle, God is there and God was with them as they traveled, but now what do you do? You've got a permanent structure, the temple, and you just got carried away. Where's God? That really helps me. So that was a new thought to them. Wait a minute, God has to be at the temple.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:22:32	Yeah, exactly. And that is a really essential framing for this seemingly bizarre vision of Ezekiel 1. This story starts with a really trippy vision, but that framework that we just gave to it, that is the key.
Hank Smith:	00:22:46	Oh, okay. That makes sense. I can see Isaiah and Jeremiah saying, "We are not treating the poor well." And Ezekiel saying, "I know, but we also broke all the rules, all the rules in Leviticus." I'm going to picture him as our friend Avram Shannon maybe.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:23:01	Yeah, he would be a great one to have this conversation with.
Hank Smith:	00:23:03	Yeah. All right, Matt, let's keep going. What should we do next?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:23:07	I think the final piece that will help us to navigate this complex book is understanding how it's organized, understanding, for example, that the first two or three chapters is this prophetic calling that Ezekiel experiences when he's in Babylon in exile. That's when he's going to see this vision of what we call the chariot throne. We'll unpack that a little bit here in a few minutes. But once Ezekiel has

that prophetic call with that remarkable vision, then he begins a series for several chapters, chapters 4 through 24, a series of oracles that he shares of judgment against Jerusalem, against Judah. It's in the middle of that, that he hears that Jerusalem itself has now finally been destroyed. He gets the news while he's there in Babylon, and you get the series of judgment oracles that are pretty heavy. I mean, there's a lot of heavy imagery in there, fairly graphic imagery.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:24:01 This is very much an ancient Near Eastern text in that sense. Once you get past those judgment oracles, then you move to chapters 25 through 32, which are now judgment oracles against Israel's neighbors, the Edomites, the Moabites, the Phoenicians, Egypt, et cetera. Then now that you're 32 chapters into these judgment oracles of woe and destruction and some pretty graphic violence, then the last part of the book really pivots. It's very much like Isaiah in that way, where Isaiah is blocked off thematically. The first half is all oracles of woe and judgment, but then the second half turns to oracles of hope. That's exactly what happens in Ezekiel. Starting in chapter 33, we then start to see a series of visions that he has about Israel's future redemption, really extraordinary stuff about gathering of Israel, the reuniting of the tribes, and ultimately the rebuilding of a magnificent temple.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:25:00 It's that message of hope that is the climactic finale of the book of Ezekiel. It's a really long journey. It's a heavy journey at times, but even understanding how the book is structured and organized can serve as a bit of a roadmap. As you're working through Ezekiel, you always kind of know where you are. Okay, I'm in the oracles of woe and judgment right now, but the messages of hope are coming. And as long as you keep all of those oracles historically rooted, I think you're on pretty good ground. When we take things out of context, we do some pretty wild stuff with scripture sometimes, and Ezekiel can be used in those wild, crazy ways. But the reality is we keep these things historically grounded and rooted, and I think it's a pretty understandable journey within that setting. So that's the overview of Ezekiel, and hopefully with that, we're ready to get started.

Hank Smith: 00:25:43 Matt, one thing that I've learned from you and others of our colleagues is to read scripture in context and to notice when we're likening versus what the author had in mind. Because sometimes if we get that mixed up, if we read a chapter of

Ezekiel and say, "Oh, this is definitely about us as Latter-day Saints," I think we can liken it to us as Latter-day Saints and be perfectly aligned. But to say that's what Ezekiel meant or that's what he had in mind, that's what the people of his time heard, I think that can be a little out of balance maybe.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:26:21 Yeah, I agree. This is something that I talk with my students about all the time at BYU when we do scripture classes, and certainly in our Ancient Near Eastern Studies program where we're training those Latter-day Saints students to also be historians of ancient scripture. It's fascinating because in those settings, I'll usually ask the students to think about what our habits are of scripture study, and I'll say, let me give an example. You guys finish the sentence. This is how we tend to study scripture. You open scripture, you read a verse, then you look up and you say, "How does this," and then without any further prompting, the rest of the class fills it in, "Apply to my life." Somehow we've really trained students that the first question that we always ask when we read scripture is, "How does this apply to my life?" Then I usually ask the students, I said, "Is that a good question?" And everyone says, "Of course, we want to apply scripture to our life."
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:27:03 We want to know what it means to me, and of course we want to have that personal connection." But then I ask them, "Is that a good first question?" That's usually when they slow down and say, "Well, what do you mean?" I said, "Let me make a suggestion. I actually wonder if the better first question is not how does this apply to my life, but what did it mean to them? What did this mean to Ezekiel in his sixth century BC context to these people in this time and place using that set of symbols?" And if we ask that question first, get into the habit of asking questions about original context and content first, and then ask, "Okay, so now how does that apply to my life?" What you'll find is that the application process will be so much more profound because now you know what you're applying.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:27:47 The reason why we often skip that first step, I think, is because that's the part that feels a lot like homework. If that means open up a good study Bible, check out a good lexicon or dictionary, get a good commentary doing that type of legwork, it's absolutely worth it because then you realize, "Oh, I know what Isaiah or Ezekiel is actually talking about." Then you can ask the very profound question of, "How does that apply to my life?" Now you know what you're applying rather than not understanding the text,

what are you applying if you don't understand the text exactly? And it just feels to me like that's not a spiritual distraction. It actually deeply enhances your experience. It just means a little bit more work and it's totally worth it.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---|
| Hank Smith: | 00:28:24 | I'm a hundred percent on board, and we don't want to make anybody feel like, "Oh, I can't just read and apply." Hey, people are busy, they've got a lot going on, and the Spirit is wonderful that way. One of my favorite quotes, however, is from Richard L. Evans, "It is good to be faithful. It is better to be faithful and competent." I just feel like there's a competency part, which is one of the major reasons we have our show, John, is because we want to help people with that context. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:28:50 | There's the interpretation of scripture. What did the original author mean? And give that context. And then there's the application, and how many of those can there be? I can apply the Sermon on the Mount to golf beautifully. Take no thought for the morrow. The morrow shall take thought for things of itself. All I worry about in golf is the next shot. That's a perfect application of that idea, but I don't think that's what Jesus was talking about there. That's a great way to put it because you can find as many applications as there are people, but I love the idea of, "Yeah, but what did they mean the first time?" And that requires some work. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 00:29:26 | It does, and especially with the Bible, and I think this is where for Latter-day Saints, there might be a slight disconnect with the biblical text because we're so used to the Book of Mormon that states, "No, this is for you. I'm speaking to you of these later times, and I've seen your day and I'm selecting certain..." So there is this sense that we get because we're more of a Book of Mormon literate people, I think, than a Bible-literate people. With the Bible, these texts written to these ancient people in their ancient context, we really do need to do a little bit more homework, and the connection that we make as a result is completely worth it. I don't think it's distracting from a spiritual experience, deeply enhances it. It's just a great habit of scripture study to get into to study at that level. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:30:03 | Matt, I'm with you. I feel the same way. I feel like it's a critical skill if you really want to get the breadth and the fullness of the strength of scripture is understanding original context. All right, Matt, what should we do next? |

Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:30:17	I really do want to try to slow down in the places where we don't usually slow down, places that we usually skip over or treat very lightly. I think those would be the places to spend a little bit more time with. Then conversely, maybe the places we're a little more familiar, maybe we can just summarize some of those quickly. Let's start with chapter one. Chapter one, Ezekiel says, basically, I'm turning 30 years old. I would've started my priestly service today, and he's sitting there by this irrigation canal, pondering all the questions probably that we've already raised. He begins to see what is really an extraordinary vision. This is where it starts to get a little bizarre, a little trippy. Ezekiel's sitting along the side of this irrigation canal. He looks up and the whole weather starts turning very stormy, and he looks to the north and he sees this massive storm cloud come rolling in.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:31:02	So you can imagine it's windy, but in the middle of this massive storm cloud, he sees something that looks like fire. He describes it as amber. This fire-encased cloud or cloud-encased fire, it starts coming closer and closer to him. As this cloud gets closer, he begins to see details emerge from that fiery core that he begins to describe. These details get a little bizarre, so let me just try to summarize them and then we'll try to make sense of it. The first thing he sees is as it gets closer, he sees that standing in the middle of that fiery center of the cloud are four creatures. All four of these creatures are standing there, but they all have four faces. It's the face of a human, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. There's four of these things coming closer and closer. Then he realizes that all four of these creatures that have four faces, they also have wings that are stretching out and that are covering their bodies and connecting the four of them in a way.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:32:00	As it gets closer and closer, he even begins to see what's in between the four creatures. Imagine all four standing in a square shape. In the middle of it, he begins to see that what was creating that fire appearance was actually burning coals, like burning incense coals that are right in the middle of these four creatures. Obviously, so smoke is starting to come out of the center out of that core. Then as it gets closer, it gets even more bizarre because at the feet of the four creatures are four pairs of interlocking wheels. Underneath each creature is a pair of wheels that are interlocking. One of the pair faces north and south, the other pair faces east-west. Each of the four creatures have one of these pairs of interlocking wheels underneath their

feet. As it gets closer, he even starts looking more at the wheels and he realizes the wheels are covered with eyes, eyes on the front and in the back.

John Bytheway:	00:32:55	Sorry.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:32:56	No, it's odd. Yeah. What are you thinking there, John?
John Bytheway:	00:33:01	Were they blinking?
Hank Smith:	00:33:06	We need to have an art contest, John, and have everybody submit their work all over the world. We'll send it to Matt and he can choose his...
John Bytheway:	00:33:12	Dizzy! Going around and around.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:33:14	I know, I know. It just would've been a trip.
Hank Smith:	00:33:16	You have the four creatures with the four faces. They all have wings.
John Bytheway:	00:33:20	And their wings kind of touch each other.
Hank Smith:	00:33:23	On the wheels are eyes, like human eyes.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:33:27	Four pairs of interlocking wheels, human eyes on the front and on the back of all of them. In the middle of this entire thing is a whole pile of burning incense coals.
Hank Smith:	00:33:39	And that would be like at the temple? What would I envision there? I don't do incense coals. Would it be like a barbecue?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:33:47	Yes. Little coals of incense that are glowing and on fire and creating the smoke. Hang on to that temple connection because it turns out the temple is going to be the key to understanding all of this. It turns out we're just seeing the lower half of this thing. Oh, there's lots more. We've got the four creatures with the four faces and the wings, the incense coals in the middle, and the four pairs of interlocking wheels with the eyes down below. Then as it gets closer within the storm cloud, Ezekiel sees that there's an entire upper half to this thing that's coming at him. The upper half consists of a dome that's over the burning coals that looks like crystal. It's like this crystal dome. Then he notices that above the dome is a throne. On the throne is

this glowing light. As it gets closer, he realizes that the glowing image on the throne looks like a human character.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:34:36 It turns out what he is seeing is the image of the glory of God sitting on a throne above the dome that covers the four beasts and creatures with the wheels. It's really a remarkable thing to imagine this all emerging in a storm cloud, this is what Ezekiel sees. At the end, he realizes that what he's looking at is an image of what he calls the glory of the Lord. In Hebrew, this is called the kavod. He's not saying that I'm seeing God himself, but I'm seeing the glory of God emanating from the throne that's on top of the dome that's over the four beasts with the incense coals and the wheels, and this whole thing comes at him as one whole unit. It's a wild image to be sure. We're only one chapter in. Usually at this point is when modern readers have fully checked out, "I have no clue what I'm reading," and then they just move on.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:35:25 I do have some thoughts on how we can unpack the significance of this, but I am curious, do you guys have any thoughts yourselves so far about what you're seeing, what he's trying to describe?
- Hank Smith: 00:35:33 The only thing I caught was the incense, the temple from what I've read, and also I'm somewhat familiar with the book of Revelation. Sounds similar to some things John sees or at least the way he describes what he sees.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:35:46 Indeed, Revelation four to five, the heavenly throne room vision.
- John Bytheway: 00:35:49 Yeah, and I was thinking of the same thing. There's some things we should all go, "Oh, there's a throne and there's the glory of God." Isaiah went into a throne room.
- Hank Smith: 00:35:59 I was going to say Isaiah six, John.
- John Bytheway: 00:36:01 He sees God high and lifted up and there's angels with wings, but a wheel full of eyes. That's a new one on me. If you get a spec in there, how do you get a... Oh man.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:36:10 I know. It's so interesting, isn't it? Well, I think you guys are really hitting on exactly where we want to go with trying to unpack the significance of this bizarre vision. If you've already been thinking about, "Wait a second, this sounds a lot like Isaiah chapter six when Isaiah was called, he received his prophetic calling experience where he was

taken in vision to what seems to be a heavenly temple of some kind, a temple where he saw God sitting on his throne surrounded by the cherubim in the Holy of Holies and the robe of God filled the temple. The incense was burning and one of the angels took the incense coal off of the altar and put it on Isaiah's mouth. That was how Isaiah was called to be a prophet. The John the Revelator experience, Revelation four through five, is very similar. I was taken up in vision into a heavenly temple where I saw God sitting on his throne surrounded by beasts that have the exact same faces that we just read here in Ezekiel and the whole place was filled with smoke.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:37:02 Then I was given a book in a prophetic call. You guys are exactly right in that what we're seeing here is a pattern that we see across biblical scripture of not saying every prophetic figure, but some prophetic figures seem to have this vision of God on the throne surrounded by these creatures. In the case of Isaiah and John the Revelator, they both seem to take place in heavenly temple settings, in temple space. It's almost like they're looking into the Holy of Holies or something. But with Ezekiel, we're given the exact same imagery that has the exact same temple connections. For example, if you think about the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple, that was considered to be God's throne room in an ancient near Eastern context. The Ark of the Covenant was the throne on which God sat, at least symbolically. It's the mercy seat.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:37:50 It's the seat on which he appears, distributes justice, mercy is very common throughout the Ancient Near East. When you have a palace or a Holy of Holies enthroning a God, that is usually guarded by these composite creatures. The biblical readers will most commonly know them as the cherubim. It's these figures that are by design meant to be otherworldly. They're meant to be composite. In some ancient near Eastern settings, they might have a body of an ox or wings of an eagle or the face of a human. That's exactly how the cherubim are described in the Garden of Eden story, but also the Cherubim that flank the Ark of the Covenant in the Jerusalem Temple, because the Ark of the Covenant is the throne of the God of Israel and it's protected by these guardian figures. That's very common in the Ancient Near East, including in Mesopotamia where Ezekiel is now sitting.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:38:44 This imagery would not have sound anywhere near as bizarre to ancient peoples as they would to us because we

don't really have a lot of context for that. Clearly what he's seeing is he's seeing God on the throne. It's almost like he's seeing the Ark of the Covenant where God's on the throne, there's these composite creatures that seem to be guarding it. Then there's the incense that John, you mentioned that that's in Ezekiel's vision as God's on the throne surrounded by the fiery seraphs, the creatures with the wings in Isaiah six, that there's the incense altar going and the incense is filling the room. That's there in Ezekiel's vision. It seems to be like in the center of this whole unit. You got the throne, the dome, and underneath it is like the burning coals of the incense, the guardian figures. But what makes Ezekiel's version of this so unique that we don't see in Isaiah six or Revelation four through five are the wheels.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:39:32 Obviously what seems to be happening here within that context is actually Isaiah does seem to be viewing a very symbolic representation of the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple, but it's a Holy of Holies on wheels.
- John Bytheway: 00:39:45 Is it because they're in Babylon? It's moved.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:39:47 Yeah, exactly. Because that's the question that Ezekiel has to wrestle with throughout this book is if the Jerusalem temple is going to be destroyed, God's house is to be destroyed, what does that mean about the presence of God? As he's sitting there thinking about this, the vision that he has in exile away from the Jerusalem temple is one of a portable holy of holies. It's a holy of holies on wheels. What's cool about the interlocking wheels is that means is that the theological message of this vision is that this holy of holies that Ezekiel is seeing can move north and south, east and west. It can go any direction. In other words, it can go with God's people into exile. It can go wherever it wants to go in fact. It can go north, south, east, west. While it's going, it's covered with the eyes.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:40:32 The wheels are covered with the eyes. This is an idea of an omnipresent, omniscient God of Israel who apparently Ezekiel is learning is not locked into the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple. It's like he's seeing the heavenly throne room that can go anywhere and can see all things and can actually interact with Israel while they're in exile hundreds of miles away from the house of God in Jerusalem.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:58 Matt, is that different than the world around them? From what I understand, which is little, you have your God probably in your temple and if it gets taken, that's it. Your

God was not powerful. This one seems to be different. This one was taken, but no, our God is still all powerful. He has wheels.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:41:17 Exactly. And that's the takeaway, and that's why as a modern reader, it can be a little hard to connect with this vision. It just seems so bizarre. But once you understand that this is simply a symbolic representation of the Ark of the Covenant, the cherubim and the Holy of Holies in the temple and it's on wheels, it can move, you then realize that this is really a fascinating development in ancient Israelite thinking because the standard assumption in all ancient cultures is that our God is found in God's house in the temple. If that temple is destroyed, man, did our God just get destroyed himself? Is he no longer with us? But this is a remarkable theological statement that this vision makes that no, our God has a holy of holies. He has a throne room that's on wheels. It can come with us anywhere it goes and it can see all, it can be anywhere.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:42:02 I think that's the first major theological contribution of this text of Ezekiel is it totally reframes the relationship between Israel and the God who remains enthroned but can follow them even when the temple is destroyed.
- Hank Smith: 00:42:15 That's very helpful.
- John Bytheway: 00:42:17 Yeah, really helpful. The animals, the different faces, I like what you said there. It's otherworldly. This is beyond us. It's just kind of sending that message that this is like in Isaiah's vision of the Seraphim and stuff.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:42:32 Yeah, exactly. And just like the cherubim. Cherubim have the bodies of a lion, the wings of an eagle, face of a human, and they're these guardian figures. When Isaiah has his vision of this in Isaiah six, he sees those wing guardian figures, but they're on fire. They're the fiery seraphs. The Hebrew word for Seraph means to be burning with fire. He sees the same things, but they're just slight adaptation. Now Ezekiel is seeing another version of that, the guardian figures around God's throne. That image, that composite image of different creatures all represented in the same figure, that would've been very intelligible to people in ancient Mesopotamia because if you ever look, for example, at the Assyrian palaces that Austin Henry Layard excavated in the 1840s and literally brought the imagery and the statues back to the British Museum, if you've ever been to

London, been to the British Museum, you've probably seen creatures that look very much like this.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:43:21 They're called Lamassu, these creatures that guarded the throne of the Assyrian kings, the body of an ox, the wings of an eagle, head of a human, that composite guardian character would've been much more familiar sounding in ancient near Eastern context than it does to us. So it's just a matter of, I said, getting a good study Bible and getting a little bit of historical context, and you realize what started off seeming like a really just bizarre vision. Lamassu sounds pretty interesting. This really kind of a cool collage of images that are not only very intelligible, but really have something very meaningful to say about the nature of God, his portability, talking about a movable holy of holies that can go with Israel into exile. That's how Ezekiel begins his priestly year, his year that he would've started as a priest. The temple comes to him in a sense.
- John Bytheway: 00:44:07 I like what you said about the eyes too, because that sounds really strange, but this is saying that God knows what's going on. He's omnipresent, he's omniscient, he sees everything. So he sees us, he sees what we're... Yeah, I love it.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:44:20 Even in those moments when we're sitting on the irrigation canal saying, "Man, this is just not turning out the way I was expecting it to turn out. I was supposed to be in the temple this year. I was supposed to be a priest this year." In that moment of wrestle and lamentation, he ends up seeing something about God that maybe had not occurred to him before, that even in exile, there's still a connection with the God of Israel.
- Hank Smith: 00:44:41 And that's where the application can become really rich because now that we sort of understand chapter one, we can put ourselves in that place where my life is not going the way I thought or I'd hoped. Can I still be connected to God? Can I still receive revelation? You've shown us in Isaiah six, we looked at Revelation four. It's sort of there in 1 Nephi 1, maybe Nephi is plain in speaking, but he says, "My father, he sees the heavens open. I saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels. One descends out of heaven, 12 others follow him. He gives me a book." It seems like a calling.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:45:18 Like a prophetic call narrative of sorts, and I think four of them exist in scripture, so I don't know if we want to

overstate and say that every prophetic writer had always had an experience like this, that's probably not the case, but these four did. So you have Isaiah six, John the revelator, Lehi, if you want to put the Book of Mormon narrative into conversation with this. We're very familiar with that. I saw God on the throne surrounded by the numberless concourses of angels or guardian figures. They're in the attitude of singing praises and brought out a book. That is very, very typical of this pattern of prophetic call narratives that we've now seen. This is the fourth example of it. The only thing that makes Ezekiel's version of it so unique is that it's that Holy of Holies on wheels. Yeah, it's on the move. Just a side note, but this chapter that we just finished will have a very long reach in later Jewish thinking.

Hank Smith:	00:46:06	Wow, that's fantastic. I love this. There's something about enthusiasm that's contagious, John, in a teacher. Whenever I talk to Matt, I get this sense of enthusiasm. Once I understand, at least somewhat, oh, that's actually beautiful. The message of, no, no, I can come to you.
John Bytheway:	00:46:25	Matt started with sometimes we go to an application right away, and with this, like you said, you almost can't. No, that's just too weird. But if you start with the context, I love it. It's really fun. The simple application, God is mobile, but understanding the context makes it really, really interesting. So you did exactly what you were explaining. Get the context first, which we just did, and now we're all excited about it.
Hank Smith:	00:46:51	I'm probably being overly sentimental here, but I like that God says to Ezekiel, "I know what day it is. I know you would've started right about now."
John Bytheway:	00:47:01	You were probably thinking that.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:47:03	So let me bring the Holy of Holies to you.
Hank Smith:	00:47:05	Yeah, I'll bring it to you.
John Bytheway:	00:47:07	Is there some significance too that Jesus's ministry began at 30?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:47:12	The only gospel that mentions that is Luke. It does seem that Luke, by saying that Jesus begins his ministry when he's 30, does seem to be pointing back to the ancient Israelite priestly tradition of starting a priestly ministry when you're

30 years old. The other gospels don't explore that image. It's only Luke. Luke does some other cool things with Jesus, kind of overlaying some cool ancient temple imagery onto Jesus. At the end of Luke's gospel, Jesus comes out and resurrected Jesus, raises his hand above his head and gives basically a priestly blessing. There's this theme in the gospel of Luke of Jesus as priest, as mediator, that the other gospels don't explore as much, but that connection I think is exactly right, John.

John Bytheway:	00:47:53	Matt, I love this. What does the dome represent?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:47:56	That's another aspect of this chariot throne vision that we're seeing here that has some really cool Hebrew Bible Old Testament connections, and that is that the word dome here really does seem to be related to what's called the firmament in Genesis chapter one. If you remember, all the way back in Genesis chapter one, we get an account of the creation through the lens of some priestly writers who are trying to understand how the God of Israel relates to the creation of the cosmos, describing the creation of the universe, creation of the world, using some ancient Near Eastern images. They describe a creation of the world in Genesis one that envisions an earth that is in fact a flat plane. Most ancient Near Eastern peoples understood the earth to be a flat plane that's in four corners, hence that scriptural image, the four corners of the earth, because you're literally imagining it as a flat, four cornered space.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:48:50	That's the earth. But at night, when you look up and you see almost like a rounded dome above you, that is what ancient near Eastern peoples imagined as the firmament, the heavenly dome that almost feels circular in shape, that rests upon the flat earth using the pillars of heaven. So you have the flat earth, pillars of heaven that support a heavenly dome, and that's where you have the moon, the sun, the stars, the constellations. Then on the other side of the heavenly dome is where God sits enthroned. That tripartite or threefold flat earth, round heavenly dome and the throne of God, that's how Genesis one describes the creation. It's not a modern scientific manual. There's a reason why we're not flat earthers today because we have no astronomy in science, but in an ancient Near Eastern setting, that's how they understood the world coming together at the hand of the God of Israel.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:49:43	What Ezekiel 1 is doing in addition to, and along with imagining the Holy of Holies on wheels, he's also imagining

that Holy of Holies is itself a microcosm. It's a scale model of the universe where you've got the earth represented by the four creatures who are in their pattern of four corners, then above them you've got the dome that's just like the firmament, and then above the dome is the throne in which God sits. Basically, what Ezekiel seems to be doing is taking the imagery from Genesis one, which itself seems to have been produced by priestly writers in the time of the Old Testament and says basically, let's shrink that down to a scale model of the cosmos that can also be on wheels. The idea is that the universe itself is God's throne, that God's temple is the universe. He's everywhere. Not only is it a scale model of the holy of holies on wheels, but it's a scale model of the universe on wheels.

Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:50:37	It's the universe over which God presides. So it's a lot of beautiful creation imagery that's in Ezekiel 1 as well.
John Bytheway:	00:50:43	The dome is the firmament.
Hank Smith:	00:50:46	I'm embarrassed to say, but for the last 60 seconds I've been searching for the word dome in Ezekiel one, and I just realized it's not in here because John, you are using...
John Bytheway:	00:50:55	I'm in the NRSV. Matt mentioned he might use the NRSV, so I thought I'd look in this one.
Hank Smith:	00:51:00	Verse 22, instead of dome, I have firmament, which makes sense because that's what Matt said, it's hearkening back to Genesis.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:51:08	Yeah. In fact, the Hebrew word is the same there. In Genesis one, when it describes the firmament or the heavenly dome that rests on the flat earth, the word in Hebrew is raqia. That's exactly the same word that's used here in Ezekiel 1:22 to describe the dome that is above the chariot throne.
Hank Smith:	00:51:26	One thing I've learned through this show is that scripture writers use scripture writers all the time. They call back. I really appreciate the idea that you started with, which is, Ezekiel's life did not go the way maybe he'd hoped or thought it would go. He is having a heavenly experience in that space, that uncomfortable space, and that to me speaks to a Latter-day Saint audience. I would've never seen that in Ezekiel 1, right, John, when life doesn't go the way you thought?

John Bytheway:	00:51:57	And here's the character of God you might say, or what's God like? I like what you said, Hank. That's probably not an accident that he came on that day to say, "You may have thought you're missing out on all this. Actually, I've got you. I've got you in mind."
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:52:11	Yeah, I love that. If we want to move forward then, chapter one is designed to be read with chapters two and three. Modern chapter divisions are often helpful for reference and all that, but they often break up literary units. We're meant to keep reading because the story's not over. We've just seen the opening scene of the vision of the chariot throne, but then what happens in chapters two and three is that Ezekiel now does experience his prophetic calling that Isaiah had experienced, that John the revelator will later experience, described in 1 Nephi for Lehi, and it's very similar. You'll actually notice a continuation of the pattern in a lot of ways. We're now moving into chapter two. Once Ezekiel sees God on his throne on this chariot, this heavenly chariot, he falls on his face. Ezekiel is handed a scroll that has writing on it on the front and the back, and he is actually told to do something really interesting.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:53:06	He's told to eat the scroll or literally consume the scroll. Once he eats it, he is then told that you will go forth and preach to a rebellious and exiled Israel. It's very clear that he is meant to be a priestly prophet to Israelites, Judahites in exile, in Mesopotamia. It's at this point that the message turns a little bit dark, and for the next several chapters, there's going to be a lot of dark, heavy imagery because the way that Ezekiel at least understands his prophetic message, it's one of woe, it's one of abominations, calling to repentance. It's the one of let me highlight your abominations and your wickedness. That's there at the very beginning of the prophetic call narrative, which is where he is told, "By the way, you're going to preach to this people and they will not resonate with your message. It's going to feel sometimes like you're living among scorpions." Kind of an encouraging way to start your ministry there.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	00:53:57	That's how it starts. If you preach this, then the blood is off of your hands. If it's not, the blood is on your hands. The imagery starts to get heavy and dark here for sure, and you can feel the weight that Ezekiel is experiencing with this feeling that he now has to bring this message to Israel where he calls out what he believes were the abominations that led to the catastrophe of the exile. As I said, from this moment forward, we are going to get that thinking through

Ezekiel's priestly lens. With that prophetic call in chapters two and three, we're now off to the next major unit of the book, which will be these oracles of judgment on Judah, Jerusalem, and even the northern tribes of Israel.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---|
| Hank Smith: | 00:54:39 | Matt, can I pause for a second and say, would it be okay if I'm applying that ingesting or consuming this book could be symbolic of you've got to internalize this message? It's got to be part of you. Could I do that? Am I okay likening that to hey... |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 00:54:58 | Yeah, for sure. Yeah, especially if we use that word likening because likening is always, I'm taking something in its original meaning and context, and I'm saying that that's kind of like this other thing. And likening, we have a really long leash on that and things that can inspire us, that can be meaningful to us as long as it's anchored to the original significance and the core message of the actual story. I think that any of those perspectives can be really valuable and enriching. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:55:20 | In my mind, Matt Grey is someone who has internalized this to the point that it's who he is. It's just who he is. This is the way he talks, this is the way he speaks. It's not something of, "Okay, I've got my script I'm supposed to read." It's actually, "This is coming from inside of me." And John, you're the same way. You're not reading a script when you're bearing your testimony. It's really inside you. It's part of who you are. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:55:46 | I was thinking of feasting upon the words of Christ, and so I thought the same way, and I thought about the very simple metaphor of the sacrament, take the remembrance of Jesus's body and Jesus's blood and internalize it, put it inside and assimilate that, which I've always loved that simple gesture. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:56:06 | You know this reference, the Lord tells Hyrum Smith, "Seek not to declare my word. First, seek to obtain my word. Then you can go forth and teach." |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 00:56:16 | An easy way out is to feel like you don't need to pay the price upfront to understand and internalize. How often do we just want to default to as long as you've got the Spirit, it'll be given to you in the very moment that which you need to say, that's true, but sometimes we forget the words before that, which is that inasmuch as you are constantly pondering the words of eternal life and treasuring them up, |

then it'll be given to you in the very moment. In other words, the Spirit can do miraculous things. It doesn't usually draw from an empty well. You need to spend time filling that well with scriptural content, knowledge, context. Once you're paying that price, then I think, yeah, once it becomes part of you, it's internalized. Now the Spirit can give to you that in the very hour that which you need because the well is filled with some really, really great, great stuff.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|--|
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 00:57:00 | That's a really fun application, a fun likening of Ezekiel's scroll here. Yeah. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:57:05 | That's going to be an odd thing to go ahead and eat that book. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 00:57:08 | Well, it's going to get more odd as we go here, so don't worry. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:57:13 | That's my autobiography title. All right. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 00:57:16 | We can summarize the next few chapters pretty briefly because once you get the idea, I think these are chapters you really can read on your own and have a sense of what it's trying to say. Because once Ezekiel is filled with the prophetic call, now he begins this section of the book, which is all the oracles of judgment against Judah, Jerusalem, and this is where we see Ezekiel's critique coming out. This is where he thinks Israel or Judah had misstepped, and this is why we lost God's presence. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:57:45 | When you say oracle, what do you mean, Matt? |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 00:57:47 | So in the ancient Near East, an oracle was those moments of divine or prophetic communication. An oracle is like maybe a prophecy, maybe it's a prophetic poem. Sometimes it could be a trance or a vision and you start uttering symbolic messages. In this case, they're oracles of judgment. Here is where I think we misstepped. It's fascinating the first few chapters of that section, so I'm thinking of the end of chapter three, all of chapter four, and the first part of chapter five, that block right there, is a really fun section to read because Ezekiel begins his message with a series of what we sometimes can call prophetic object lessons. They're these physical things that you do that enact your prophecy or your prediction. We've seen this elsewhere in the Old Testament. We've seen |

Isaiah run around naked in the cities as a prophecy, what's going to happen to the kingdom?

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:58:39 We've seen Jeremiah say, the house of Israel is like this beautiful pot, this cooking pot, and then everyone's oohing and ahing and then he throws it on the ground and it smashes. We've seen prophetic object lessons before. That's not new to Old Testament readers, but Ezekiel's particular lineup of prophetic object lessons are pretty interesting. I'll just give you a few examples. He starts with the idea that where Ezekiel is to bind himself with cords as a way to think about the binding of Judah and Jerusalem and how the enemies are coming upon them and they'll soon be bound and taken into captivity. So you can imagine Ezekiel literally physically binding himself with cords and walking around bound as a prophetic message, a prophetic object lesson. Here's what's happening, but then it just gets better. I'll just go through these quickly. The next one is fun.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 00:59:27 He's told to take some brick and to build a little model of the city of Jerusalem. Everyone's gathering around, all the exiles are going, oh, that's cool. That my house. There's the temple. Yeah, because he's building this model. Then he continues the object lesson by then bringing in Babylonian siege works into the model. All of a sudden he lays siege to this model, and then ultimately this model is going to be destroyed. It's almost like imagine building a really beautiful sandcastle of the city and everyone like, oh, that's great, and then just taking a stick and beating. It's a prophetic object lesson of what's going to happen to Jerusalem because he's writing literally... Jerusalem's got years, maybe months left before the Babylonians do in fact destroy it. These are his prophecies enacted through these physical objects. Those are the first two, the binding with cords and then the brick model of a besieged Jerusalem.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:00:16 That's in chapter four. The next one of chapter four is just wild. It's where he is told now to represent the bondage of Israel and Judah, you are to lie on your right side for 390 days to represent the bondage, the exile of Israel, then lay on your left side for 40 days for the bondage of Judah. For over a year, the idea is that he's literally laying on one side saying, okay, now this is Israel or this is now Judah. Then it gets even more wild because he's told, "How are you going to eat during that year where you're just lying around on your side as this prophetic object lesson?" And he's told, well, to symbolize the poor quality of food and lifestyle and living, when you're in exile, while you're doing this

prophetic object lesson, you have to eat bread. And he describes these grains that can make a pretty grim tasting bread.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---|
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:01:11 | But the wild thing is God actually says, "You'll make that bread, you'll bake that bread over a fire fueled by human dung." |
| Hank Smith: | 01:01:20 | Wow. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:01:21 | That just is a symbol for how grim their realities are going to be as exiled Israel and exiled Judah. I absolutely love Ezekiel's response here. It actually sounds a lot like Peter when he received the vision in Acts where he was told to eat unclean things and Peter said, "Oh Lord, I've never eaten un-kosher food." That's exactly how Ezekiel responds here because human dung, a very strict priestly interpretation of human dung is that human dung is ritually unclean. Not all Israelites or greater Jews would probably have had that same interpretation, but it's probably unclean, but I'm talking ritual impurity, the stuff that Ezekiel's really concerned about. So what's fun about this is Ezekiel with that, he says, "I've never done anything ritually unclean. I've lived a really good ritual purity lifestyle as a priest and no, to eat food baked over fire fueled by human dung, that would be ritually unclean." And then God just changes his mind. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:02:09 | All right, fine. If you're not comfortable, then make it cow dung. That's fine. I love how Ezekiel is far more concerned about this than God is actually because I know that's the standard. I've never compromised that standard. And somebody says, "I've never done anything ritually unclean like this." And God's, all right, fine. Then make it cow dung. That's fine. But the point is this is going to be a grim existence and this is your prophetic object lesson. I really get a kick out of that story. I think that's a fun one. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:02:33 | That makes me laugh. The Lord's like, "And do it this way." And he's like, "No." He's like, "All right, you're right. That was too far." |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:02:41 | Yeah, fine, fine. If you're uncomfortable with those too far. Have the cow dung, that's fine. For some reason though, I've never seen this depicted in a seminary video. I don't know why. |

John Bytheway:	01:02:50	I teach to 12 and 13 year olds, they would love this lesson. Can I ask you something though? Because forgive my ignorance, I'm a little confused. They are already out of Jerusalem. Why is he portraying? Is he saying this is what's happening back at home?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:03:04	Yes. Ezekiel is doing all this while Jerusalem still stands, but it's on the brink of destruction. He's prophesying of events that could be transpiring any moment now on the other side of the fertile crescent over in Israel, over in Judah, because he's in Babylon. These are prophecies of imminent events. Although the funny thing is Jesus actually does use prophetic object lessons too. The whole cleansing of the temple seems to be another physical object lesson enacting a prophecy of what will happen to the temple.
Hank Smith:	01:03:31	The fig tree?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:03:33	Absolutely. Jesus is very much in this mode of Israelite prophet using physical objects and lessons to convey the prophetic message. It's just that some of these prophetic object lessons, they get a little earthy, earthier than what we're used to in our Sunday school classes. But man, this is where the good stuff is.
Hank Smith:	01:03:50	Yeah, it is. Is it Jeremiah that has to bury underwear by the side of the river?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:03:55	Yes.
Hank Smith:	01:03:56	And he has to go back and get it and he's like, "That's Israel."
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:03:59	We need the whole video series of these things. Yeah, for sure. Help us to envision this. Or Ezekiel's nakedness for how long he's walking.
Hank Smith:	01:04:07	He's walking the streets.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:04:08	Yeah. That didn't make it in the church art either. I'm not sure how.
John Bytheway:	01:04:13	He had to lie on his side for 390 days.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:04:17	That's the text. That's what it says. While he's eating this dung baked bread.

Hank Smith:	01:04:22	I shouldn't laugh, but it's a scene, right? We have PowerPoint now, but back then...
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:04:30	It's a series of object lessons that feels very foreign to us. We don't interact with our prophetic leaders this way today, but this is a different time and place. As restoration scripture says repeatedly that God simply works with people in their time, place, culture, and language and their understanding. This is a very ancient Near Eastern story.
John Bytheway:	01:04:48	Yeah, I think I'd rather do PowerPoint.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:04:52	We can give it a try though, John. Don't judge until you've tried it. You never know how this will land with your students.
John Bytheway:	01:05:00	Rhodes bake and serve bread. Cook this with some cow dung.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:05:04	We still have more to go here. We're only in chapter five.
Hank Smith:	01:05:07	This is definitely different, these object lessons. They would be attention getters. What happens next, Matt?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:05:14	We can start moving increasingly quickly through this because once you get the point of what's happening here, I think it's pretty straightforward. Although there are a few more chapters that I at least want to quickly highlight that I think are really important to the story. The next one being Ezekiel chapter eight. With the chapters three, four, and five, we've walked through those object lessons. Chapters five and six really turn now to a condemnation of ancient Judah and ancient Israel. Four, again, for ritual impurities, for adding foreign elements into worship in the temple, very priestly interests and priestly critiques of how Ezekiel felt the sacred space of the temple was defiled. Then we move to another visionary segment, chapters eight and nine, and then 10 and 11. That whole block right there is another really interesting section where Ezekiel, it's like he falls into a trance or has a vision and it's a little bit bizarre, but a hand comes down and takes him by the hair and swoops him up into the sky and he's transported in vision back to Jerusalem.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:06:13	In fact, he has described, he says that, "I found myself placed on an exceedingly high mountain and I'm overlooking the city of Jerusalem." So clearly this is a

visionary experience. I don't think Ezekiel traveled. I don't know that we can say here's the exceedingly high mountain. There aren't a lot of exceedingly high mountains in Jerusalem. Mount of Olives is as high as it gets probably. But the point is in this visionary symbolic sense, he's back in Jerusalem now and this angelic guide starts showing him things that will give substance to his later prophecies, such as let's show you the abominations that have defiled the Jerusalem Temple. Chapter eight, Ezekiel is in vision back in Jerusalem and his angelic guide kind of brings him up to the temple walls. There's a little kind of a hole in the wall and Ezekiel peeks his head through there and what he sees are the things that as a priest would've absolutely shocked him.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|--|
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:07:05 | For example, he sees these foreign elements that had been incorporated into the courtyards of the Jerusalem Temple, the Temple of Solomon, that includes images and engravings of all sorts of unclean animals that had often been incorporated into Near Eastern religious worship. So in other words, Mesopotamian deities, Canaanite deities, foreign gods. It was the foreignness and the uncleanness that really concerns Ezekiel here as he's looking at and seeing these things in the actual temple. Then as he continues to look at the outer courtyards of the temple, he realizes that the 70 elders, remember this kind of group of 70 elders that since Moses and Mount Sinai had always been a bit of a governing council of sorts among the people, that these 70 elders are actually burning incense in the temple courtyards to these graven images, to these unclean animals. As a priest, Ezekiel is just horrified by what he's seeing as these defilements from his perspective of the temple courts. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:08:04 | From Ezekiel's perspective as a priest, this answers for him the question of why the temple's going to be destroyed and why God's presence will leave this temple. It's because of what he's seeing here in chapter eight. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:08:16 | Ezekiel was taken captive in that Babylonian captivity, but Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed, maybe conquered to some degree in that they took people. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:08:29 | And even appointed their own king on the throne, Zedekiah. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:08:32 | Okay. And things are getting worse at the temple and that's what he's seeing right now. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:08:37 | That's what he's seeing and that's how he's envisioning it. |

John Bytheway:	01:08:40	God can move, so they're going to defile the temple, but God has a chariot with wheels. He can go wherever he wants.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:08:46	Exactly. In fact, that's where the next part of this section is going to go. This vision will actually conclude with a very graphic destruction of Jerusalem. In fact, a very graphic slaughter of the people. This is something that is one of those hard parts of the Old Testament when you read it as a modern reader and you're like, "Oh gosh, this is so hard to read." And it is, it's very hard to read. But the framework for this event or these developments is that Ezekiel is seeing what's defiling the temple and what he's soon going to see, we're still in chapters eight, nine, and 10. What he's soon going to see is God's glory will leave the Jerusalem temple and mount the chariot throne. This is why. So he's explaining why this is. Once God's presence has left the Jerusalem temple and mounted the chariot throne and it's getting ready now to take off, once God's presence is out of the temple, the city can now be destroyed.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:09:37	This is how Ezekiel describes the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurs in 586 BC. This is the destruction that Lehi fled or that Jeremiah was predicting and so forth. To prepare for that though, something else really interesting happens because Ezekiel, it's almost like he says, "Well, wait a second. Before you destroy the city, there are surely some people in the city who have kept your commandments, who have not defiled the temple. What about the innocent?" The next part of this visionary sequence is that these six characters show up. They're almost like the destructive angel, it's all like angels of death in a sense. The command goes out that before you destroy the city and wipe out the people, go forth and find all of those who had kept God's statutes and mark them with a sign on their forehead. And the word here is literally the Hebrew word Tav, which is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which in this period was simply made with an X.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:10:32	And so go out, literally put an X on the forehead of anyone that has been keeping God's statutes, has been keeping the priestly code of purity and so forth, and very much like the Passover. In fact, there's a lot of Passover connection here that just like those homes that had the blood on the door, the angel of death will pass over those homes, this is from Exodus, will pass over those homes, but everything else will be destroyed. That is being repeated here. This is something that again will be repeated in the Book of Revelation, just

like the Book of Revelation describes God's heavenly throne room in ways that are very similar to chapter one in Ezekiel. So you might remember when the Book of Revelation is describing the plagues of this apocalyptic scenario, it's those with the mark of the beast on their forehead will be wiped out, but those with the seal of God on their forehead will be preserved from those plagues.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:11:20 It's the exact same imagery. It's just echoing this Ezekiel symbolism. Let's just go ahead and wrap up this visionary sequence. Chapters 10 and 11 then. So once Ezekiel has seen Jerusalem, he's seen the defilement of the Jerusalem Temple, the righteous are now sealed with the mark and the angels of death are sweeping out and destroying the city. But the final step in that visionary sequence is he sees the chariot throne idling above the Jerusalem temple, idling. It's humming and it really does feel... This sounds so odd because what happens is God's glory then will depart the temple, get on the chariot throne, and the chariot throne will then take God over the Mount of Olives and head out to the east. It's almost like the Harley is just humming out there. It's like this heavenly Harley. It's humming, you can hear the rumbling of the engine and all it's waiting for is for the rider to get on and it's out of here.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:12:17 That's exactly what happens. God's glory comes out of the temple of Jerusalem, gets on the chariot throne, and as it's on its way out, peeling out of the city, going over the Mount of Olives to the east, before it does though, the angels of death, those characters reach into the undercarriage where all the burning incense is, remember in between the beasts and the dome and all the wheels is all the burning coals. They reach in and they each take handfuls of the burning coals and it's the burning coals that they chuck down on the city to represent its destruction.
- John Bytheway: 01:12:46 Destruction.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:12:47 Which is actually the same image that's used in the Book of Revelation in its apocalyptic scenario, so more intertextuality there. The idea is that that's how the destruction of Jerusalem is symbolized in this particular vision. It's the burning incense coals from the undercarriage of the chariot throne that they pick up, they just chuck these burning coals on the city and the city is wiped out, it's destroyed. Then the Harley, the chariot throne, just goes right over the Mount of Olives and off to the east, meaning it goes with God's people into exile, even if the city itself

and the temple itself had been destroyed. Really fascinating visionary sequence there between chapters eight and chapter 11. Given our time, I think we'll go ahead and skip these, but this is chapters 12 through 24. I'll just mention them that these are chapters that reading them in historical context, they're just simply different ways, different metaphorical symbols and images to describe Ezekiel's critique of Judah, Jerusalem and Israel.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---|
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:13:41 | It's a pretty dark, pretty heavy section to read, but historically you have a pretty clear sense of what he's saying and how he's doing it. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:13:49 | The heavenly Harley? |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:13:51 | Yeah. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:13:52 | Jehovah has left the building. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:13:54 | Jehovah's left the building. Powerful image. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:13:56 | Scripture study can be fun. Whoever said it couldn't be fun. Scripture study with Dr. Matthew Grey. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:14:02 | Well, hope this is helpful. In that case, that can bring us into probably the final segment of the book. We should look at chapters 33 through 39. Having just looked at all those chapters of judgment, oracles and oracles of woe, Jerusalem, Judah, their neighbors. In chapter 33, now kind of like the middle of Isaiah shifts in tone, so the middle of Ezekiel now shifts in tone. Starting in chapters 33 and 34, we shift over to these oracles of hope and restoration. This is where Ezekiel starts giving a different series of images that have to do with Israel's restoration. It's gathering, it's the rebuilding of a temple in a time when God's presence will one day go back to the land from which we've been exiled. There's this hope that after this destructive exile, the despair sitting along irrigation ditches in Babylon wondering that is all lost. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:14:55 | Ezekiel now turns towards this hope that no, no, there's a beautiful future ahead, a beautiful future where God will be your shepherd, where a Davidic prince who really knows how to shepherd will come and lead the flock. And it's in that sequence of restoration images and metaphors, that's where we get the one that probably Latter-day Saints are more familiar with, Ezekiel 37. It might be important here to |

quickly note what is in Ezekiel 37. That's a chapter that probably most Latter-day Saint classrooms will slow down and spend some time with. I'll just mention it briefly. This is the vision of the value of the dry bones. In this series sequence of oracles of hope, the next one is in Ezekiel 37. Ezekiel is taken to this valley of dried bones. It's like this graveyard. He's like, "What am I looking at here?" And what he's told is this represents exiled Judah and exiled Israel.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:15:46 Our hope is lost. We've been completely devastated and decimated. Here we are in a valley of these dry bones. Then he sees the two sticks come together. Our friend and colleague Joe Spencer has done a really nice job of reminding us not to be too hasty in how we interpret the two sticks. We often like, "Oh, that's the Bible and the Book of Mormon." And Joe points out that, yeah, we can eventually get there in our interpretive reading of this chapter, but initially it really is a pretty simple metaphor. It's another one of these object lessons where he says, Hey, take two sticks. Okay, take up a piece of wood here. Take a piece of wood here on the one write for Israel, on the one write for Judah. These simply are two pieces of wood. The idea is that they look separate, but watch this and they come together.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:16:26 And when the gathering of Judah and Israel, when they come back together, like these two sticks are coming back together in this prophetic object class, these two sticks are coming back together, when that happens, you start to see the rumble in the valley. All of a sudden all those dry bones start coming back to life. The way they come back to life, it is a really interesting description. It's like he sees the organs and the guts, then the sinews, and then the skin starts flapping on it. Seeing these skeletons literally come back to life. Next thing you know, they're standing there as this mass of beautiful humanity. It's resurrected Israel, Judah, it's Israel has been brought back together because they're going to come back one day. They're going to be gathered. They're going to be restored just like these two sticks were brought together so this valley of dry bones will have life breathed into it one more time.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:17:12 The Spirit of God will blow through this valley and all of these skeletons will come back to life. That's a symbol for Israel and Judah being reunited, being restored in this end times era of refreshing and restoration. And of course, later Latter-day Saints then take that image and say, "Well, is that like the Book of Mormon? Is that like the Bible?" Joe

did a really nice job of pointing out that W.W. Phelps seemed to be the first one to try to make a direct Book of Mormon connection with the stick. Certainly a Latter-day Saint tradition, a venerable Latter-day Saint tradition is to read the Book of Mormon and the Bible as the stick of Judah and the stick of Joseph. But again, originally, there's probably just a much more simple explanation of that. It's simply two pieces of wood, one representing Judah, one representing Israel. They've been separated, but now they're coming back together and to show you what that's going to look like, watch the valley of dry bones come back to life.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|--|
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:18:01 | It's the resurrection of the house of Israel in a sense. Beautiful image, and then of course can have later likening value for sure for other purposes. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:18:08 | Four years ago, we had Jen Martin and she talked about restoring the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom and putting the divided kingdoms, putting them back together as a possible fulfillment also, which is something they would've understood then. They don't know what the Book of Mormon is in Ezekiel's time. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:18:27 | I think Joe's article does a nice job of that actually pointing out that even if W.W. Phelps and later Parley Pratt and later thousands of Latter-day Saint missionaries say, "Oh, that's the Book of Mormon and the Bible," that was an interpretation of this passage that's certainly fascinating and can be very valuable. But I love how our friend and colleague Joe Spencer gave us a reminder that actually section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants almost adds a little subtle correction to that, that the Book of Mormon is the record of the stick of Joseph. The Stick of Joseph is just a stick that represents the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Now you can have a record of Northern Israelites, but the stick itself is not the record. The stick itself just symbolizes the Northern Kingdom. But the record of the Stick of Joseph, now we can start talking about what is the record of the Northern Kingdom and does the Book of Mormon play into that? |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:19:10 | Joe is just one of our great Book of Mormon scholars and thinkers, theologians, and does such a nice job walking us through the history of interpretation of that. It's not a radical shift in the way we view the restoration. It's just a reminder to be careful and thoughtful readers of scripture |

and that words mean things and that we just want to be paying attention to that as careful readers of the text.

- Hank Smith: 01:19:29 Matt, that is fantastic. I do the same thing in my class. Maybe we have some listeners out there who are a little like, "Whoa, hang on." Getting nervous. No, no, don't be nervous. Don't be nervous. This is a wonderful place to be where we can say, "All right, what did Ezekiel mean in his time and space? How did the people he was writing to receive it? And then how has that been interpreted later?" And we're fine. We're totally safe. The article that Matt referred to, this is from [Joseph Spencer](#) we've had on the show, The Sticks of Judah and Joseph: Reflections on Defending the Kingdom. It's in a book called They Shall Grow Together by our friends, Charles Swift and Dr. Nick Frederick. Matt, I love what you've done here, and this is a very healthy, very responsible way, and it enables me. I remember teaching this to my son before he went on his mission.
- Hank Smith: 01:20:18 I said, "It'll help you engage with readers of the Bible if you don't come at this with that first interpretation of see the Book of Mormon is right here in Ezekiel." That's a very valid interpretation from a Latter-day Saint perspective. But let's look at it in its original context as much as we can, because there's a beautiful message there that we could miss, that God is a restorer, that God is a repairer, that there is hope. After destruction, the question that he asks, can these bones live? Is there any hope?
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:20:51 And a restorer of families. These are two family branches that were broken off, but now they're coming back together in this beautiful resurrection. There's a lot of great perspectives, messages, insights that we can gain from reading it in context, and we can share those with other Bible reading.
- John Bytheway: 01:21:05 That's what enables Matt to be able to write for biblical archeology review and things like that, because the other scholars will say, "Yeah, okay. I like the precision and being careful."
- Hank Smith: 01:21:17 I like that too. I'm going to go in and read Joe's article there. And just so everybody knows, out of the four of us here, every one of us love the Book of Mormon and believe it to be the word of God. There's no one here questioning that. We're saying, "Hey, let's take a look at this Ezekiel 37, make

sure we're looking at it in a responsible way." I think the way that the Lord intends us to look at it.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|--|
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:21:37 | Exactly. And if you do read Joe's article, and I'll let him have the final word on his argument there, the way he ties it together, I think you'll find to be so rich and faith-informing. Do check it out as always. Joe Spencer is one of our best Book of Mormon thinkers. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:21:50 | Yeah. We'll have our great Lisa Spice. Put that on the show notes. followHIM.co , followHIM.co . Come over and read the article. FollowHIM we are big Joe Spencer fans, as we are Matthew Grey fans. I shouldn't have laughed this much or just had such a good time thinking about the Heavenly Harley, but this has been fantastic. Matt, let's keep going. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:22:10 | Well, we actually are coming close to the end, but before we get to what I think is the grand finale of Ezekiel, there are two more chapters that we'll just mention briefly. So in chapters 38 and 39, we do get now two chapters dealing with an event that sometimes as modern Bible readers, we refer to as the war of Gog and Magog. This is a chapter where it's, again, highly symbolic. In fact, if you read through the logistics of it, it's very difficult to try to understand some kind of literal fulfillment of this. Having said that, that doesn't stop enthusiasts. Anytime there's tension in the Middle East wondering, oh, is this the moment where we read Ezekiel 38? We've seen that recently with the war in Iran. But the reality is, I don't know if that's how this is intended to be read. I'm a better historian than I am a prophet, so I don't want to be definitive on that. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:22:55 | But at the end of the day, what we have here in Ezekiel 38 and 39 are probably just a series of, again, scriptural symbols that just refer to this ultimate conflict between the God of Israel and the enemies of Israel in which the God of Israel will come out victorious. So as part of this message of hope that Israel will be restored and will be gathered again, it'll be resurrected, the breath of life will be back in their bones, Ezekiel 37, then the enemies of Israel will ultimately fail in their attempts to destroy God's people. I mean, that really does seem to be the symbolic message. I mean, the word gog itself or Gog, that comes from Genesis 10. That's one of the nations that are just listed in the table of nations in Genesis. So it really does seem very symbolic. It's very difficult to pinpoint specific historical nations as much as we want to do that as modern readers. |

Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:23:42	And every now and then you'll see a YouTube channel that'll really try to make a strong case for, oh, it's Russia or it's China or it's Iran. I just don't know if any of that was on Ezekiel's radar, to be honest with you. I think at the end of the day he's saying, look, there's going to be this showdown between the God of Israel and the enemies of Israel, and God will win and Israel will be left standing as this renewed, rejuvenated, restored people. I take that for what it's worth. I'm sure people disagree with my approach on that, and that's fine. Just be aware that there are other ways to read that passage other than with the last day's emphasis of literalism. So just a little bit of modesty and humility I think would be really good. Reading it in context is helpful. I will say that once again, the Book of Revelation draws heavily upon this exact same image.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:24:21	In fact, when the Book of Revelation describes what that writer refers to as the Battle of Armageddon, it's almost the exact same language where there's going to be this battle, the God of Israel will come and wipe out Israel's enemies. At the end of the day, there's going to be this great sacrificial feast. All that imagery is right from Ezekiel that is used by the Book of Revelation. So a lot more of intertextuality is happening here. Literacy in Ezekiel translates well into literacy in the Book of Revelation. Reading at this deep level has long-term payoff as well, I think.
Hank Smith:	01:24:51	I think we have a tendency to too quickly jump into last days, Second Coming. I'm going to figure out what it all looks like today as if there was some sort of encoded message. I don't think that's a healthy way to read scripture. In fact, John, do you remember when Dr. Nick Frederick came for the Book of Revelation? He said, "This has actually led to a lot of tragedy when you try to tie it to something that it's not tied to." He talked about how some of these groups that have been group suicide, things like that, have started in scripture. Don't do that. Let's read Ezekiel the way Ezekiel meant.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:25:28	Just be cautious, just be thoughtful, reflective, maybe more modest and humble about how we declare our interpretations of some of these things. I think Ezekiel is probably doing something along those lines. He's just using symbols from his day, his world that connect with ancient near Eastern readers and saying that, yeah, that hope that restoration's going to come and Israel will not have to worry about their enemies anymore.

John Bytheway:	01:25:48	Overwhelmingly, the message that we get from our living prophets is not when will Christ come, it's come to Christ right now. Then you're already there when he comes.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:26:01	Which is Jesus' message in Matthew 24 and 25. When you're thinking about the end times, Lord, when are you going to come? He says, "Well, let's just put it this way. It's going to be an unexpected day, and when that unexpected day happens, those who are caught unexpectedly administering to the sick, visiting the imprisoned, feeding hungry people, clothing naked people, those who are caught unexpectedly doing those things in that day are going to be the sheep exalted at the right hand." There's an unexpectedness and a discipleship message more than a, "Hey, get your checklist out and make sure you're keeping your eye on the news every night to make sure that the different nation..." That's just a totally different approach.
Hank Smith:	01:26:33	I think so too. I remember President Oaks saying, "72-hour kits are good. A 24-hour cycle of righteous living is better."
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:26:42	That's great. I don't want to be too dismissive. I mean, I have dear friends and family members who really find meaning in that, and we're just discussing another way that we could read these texts that I think could be very, very meaningful.
Hank Smith:	01:26:52	Yeah, I think so too. Matt, so you're telling us there's a little more left?
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:26:58	There is a little more left, and if anyone is still with us, I don't know what hour we're on here, but this has been a marathon run through Ezekiel, but it turns out there are eight or nine chapters that are left. They are extraordinary. It's a remarkable finale to this latter half of Ezekiel that's focusing on hope and restoration. And what it is, it's a vision of just an extraordinary temple complex. The implication is that this is going to be the temple of a rebuilt, restored Jerusalem. To put it into context, this vision of a new temple, of a new temple complex, of a new holy land, in fact, it's not just a temple vision, it's a vision of an entire land that's been purified, cleansed, and that can be rebuilt. This is all happening now after the destruction of the first temple, but before the rebuilding of the second temple.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:27:51	This is presented in kind of a visionary way, so it's definitely Ezekiel saying that then I was taken in vision and shown this thing, and this temple complex is just extraordinary. Again,

going back to our discussion, is this literal or something else going on here? Because the reality is they did go back to Jerusalem in the year 539, a few decades after Ezekiel would've died probably. The Persians destroy Babylonia. Cyrus the great King of the Persians destroys Babylon, allows Judean leadership to go back, and they rebuild Jerusalem. They rebuild the temple with Ezekiel in their hands, the text of Ezekiel in their collection. The second temple never did look like this. In fact, the way we're going to describe this rebuilt Jerusalem temple is on such a grand scale. If you actually do the measurements, and usually when you see qubits as a modern reader, that's usually when you kind of check out, okay, I'm done.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:28:42 I'm not going to read that. But actually read the cubits. Actually look what the measurements are saying. This thing is massive. Literally, it's miles wide, miles long. There's no literal geography that this fits in Jerusalem, in Israel itself. That really does raise the question of are we to take this vision literally? Is this literally a blueprint of a future Jerusalem temple? If we selectively read a verse here or a verse there, we can sometimes feel that way. Or if we take it all as a total vision, chapters 40 through 48 as one whole and we read it all in context, or is this an ideal? Is it a utopian temple? Is it the idea of Ezekiel saying, "Look, as a Zadokite priest with my priestly interests and my priestly concerns of ritual purity, of keeping foreign elements out, this is the ideal temple from my perspective, even if it was not the literal temple that was rebuilt in the second temple period, or even necessarily a literal physical thing that we should look forward to at the end times.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:29:40 The temple mount itself in this vision is bigger than the current city of Jerusalem. It's modeled after Solomon's temple with some massive modifications, the law of Moses, graded zones of holiness, ritual purity is guarding the temple space. In fact, this whole section in some ways can be referred to as the Torah of the temple. If Leviticus were to be rewritten by Ezekiel and say, "This is what the ideal ultimate temple would look like," that's probably what we're reading here. We're learning a lot about Ezekiel in this vision. We're learning a lot about how Zadokite priests would envision the future temple. Turns out this is not the only vision of a restored temple that early Jews will have. Other Jews, like the last few chapters of Isaiah, also envision an end times temple, but it's going to look very different.

John Bytheway:	01:30:27	I like the way you said that, Matt. This is a Zadokite priest saying, "Man, this temple would be so great." But it's interesting. It wouldn't fit on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:30:38	Actually crunch the numbers of the cubits, especially when you're talking about the royal cubit, the extended cubit. This thing is massive. It's hard to imagine this literally fitting in any geographical physical space that we know of, but it's a magnificent vision. It really is.
Hank Smith:	01:30:52	And maybe that's a message itself. God is glorious, bigger than you ever thought possible. It's a dream. It's heaven.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:30:59	A lot of beautiful symbolism here that can be read in different ways. If you guys are okay with it, let's do a tour of that temple.
Hank Smith:	01:31:05	I want to walk around this temple of Ezekiel's.
John Bytheway:	01:31:08	I want to ride a Harley around it.
Hank Smith:	01:31:10	Yes, the heavenly Harley.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:31:12	I'll just give you a tour of it. I'll try to visually reconstruct it, at least I guess verbally reconstruct it. You have to imagine this in your mind. But again, if you go online, if you do a Google image search of Ezekiel's temple, there actually are some really good artistic reconstructions of this whole complex that label it with the scriptures. Here's the gist of it. The opening part of this vision, again, Ezekiel is back in Jerusalem now in a visionary sense, and he looks down and he has an angelic guide again. We've seen this idea before. This angelic guide has measuring tools in his hand. He's got the ropes, he's got the cubit stick, he's got all those things, the reed. He's basically now walking Ezekiel through what this complex is going to look like. It's based on Solomon's temple and its various courtyards, but with massive modifications.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:31:59	For example, he first describes there being an outer wall that kind of partitions off the entire temple space, like the later Temple Mount would have something like that. But the way he describes that outer wall, again, it's like I think each outer wall is a mile long and you do the math and that's a lot of mileage just within the space of this temple complex. That's not to even mention the larger land around

it, which again is I think even well beyond the temple complex. So this is a massive thing that he's seeing. But as he's describing this, he's describing that this outer wall, it's like a defensive wall that goes around the temple complex and that there are three massive gateways, one gateway on the north, one gateway on the east, and one gateway on the south, not on the west. And then he describes the gateways.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|--|
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:32:44 | The gateways are like these six chamber gates. You walk in there and these gateways themselves, by the way, are massive. I think if you do the measurements, each of the gateways are the size of what Solomon's temple had been. That's just the entrance to the outer courtyard. So they're massive and they have six chambers, three on each side. They're decorated in the interior with palm trees. They're walking into the space and it's like you're recreating the garden of Eden. You're walking into the paradise of God. We'll see that imagery permeate this vision. A lot of paradisiacal imagery. It's like Eden and restore, which is very typical in ancient Near Eastern temple symbolism. You have the six chamber gateways and they feel like a fortress because archeologically we know that the great cities that Solomon had built like Meggido and Hazor and Gezer, they all had multi-chambered gates that look exactly like what Ezekiel is describing here. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:33:32 | It's almost like it's a fortress. It's almost like it's a fortification wall that guards this city. And we'll see that Ezekiel very much sees this as sacred space that needs to be protected from the impurities that caused the destruction of the first temple. Then he describes going in through these gateways when all purified Israelites can go, meaning foreigners cannot go into the outer courts. The first graded zone of holiness is the foreigners have to stay out of this temple. That will be different than the later chapters of Isaiah, because Isaiah also envisions a later temple, but it's a temple of all nations, a house of prayer for all nations. That's not Ezekiel. This is Ezekiel saying, no, no, no. There's the foreign elements that got us in trouble in the first place. So let's keep the foreignness outside so only Israelites can go into this outer court. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:34:22 | And once you get into the outer court, he then describes there being the outer court space as where the Israelites who are purified can participate in the sacrificial cult by eating the meat of the sacrifices that were offered on the altar. A part of worship in ancient Israelite temple space is |

eating of the meat that had been sacrificed. You're literally communing with a physical meal, you're eating the flesh of the sacrificial animal. Yes, Christian Eucharist will come out of that tradition, the idea of eating the meat or the flesh of the animal that had been sacrificed. Christian Eucharist or sacrament communion will be a bloodless version of that, but it's the same idea. In ancient Israel, it was a very much physical experience. You're sacrificing the animal, slaughtering it, roasting the meat or boiling it. Priests eat part, you eat part, and that's part of your worship.

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:35:12 In this particular temple space, the entire outer court is designed for the Israelites to sit and eat the meat of the sacrifices. In fact, it describes in the four corners of this outer courtyard are the kitchens where the meat will be prepared. After the animal's been slaughtered, literally the kitchens are there to prepare the food, to prepare the rest of the meal. Then there's 30 chambers that go all the way around the outer courtyard and those 30 chambers are dining rooms for Israelites to eat the sacrificial meals. Then you take a few steps up. I should have mentioned, by the way, that to get to those outer gates, you have to take seven steps up. The whole thing, by the way, is going to be a series of ascending platforms. It's going to almost feel like a cosmic mountain or it's almost going to feel like a Mesopotamian ziggurat to some extent where it's layered platforms that you have to ascend.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:36:02 You go up your first seven steps. If you're a purified Israelite, you're in the outer court, you eat your meal, but then the next eight steps are for the Zadokite priests. Oh, it turns out Ezekiel's a Zadokite. Yeah. I think only the Zadokites should do this. Turns out that the inner courtyard is also guarded by three gateways that also have different chambered rooms in them, if that makes sense, but only Zadokites can go in there. Zadokites who will be serving as priests in the actual sanctuary can go into those inner gates. It's in the inner gates where they will have tables for the chopping up of the animals. In other words, the actual work of slaughtering the animal by the altar, but then putting it on a table and taking the skin off of it, hanging it on meat hooks, chopping up the meat, taking out the guts and the fat.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:36:52 I mean, all that stuff is done in the inner gateways, these rooms that have tables that are designed to basically serve as a priestly butcher shop. We have that, but the other thing that is interesting is that the other things that those

inner gateways can be used for is in addition to chopping up the meat on the tables, some of those inner rooms of the inner gates can be used by the singers of the Levitical choirs, reminding us that in Ezekiel's idealized version of temple worship here, all of your sacrifices and your worship in the sanctuary are all attended by Levitical choirs chanting psalms of temple worship and praise. Not modern Protestant four-part harmony. It's ancient Middle Eastern chanting. It's a whole sensory experience. It's like a barbecue on the one hand, a butcher house on the other, slaughterhouse. The whole place is going to be filled with incense.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:37:44 Then you've got the Levitical choirs chanting. It is taking you to a different place. You're entering the mountain of God, very immersive and sensory in that way. And that's what the inner gates are designed to do. The sanctuary itself has a whole series of annexed rooms around the sanctuary, and in the annexed rooms you have changing rooms for the Zadokite priests. The Zadokite priests can go into their changing rooms, take off their street clothes, put on their priestly garments of their cap, their white robe and their sash, which that'll be the standard clothing of the priests who are doing the sacrifices. They have changing rooms where they can change into their priestly garments. They have treasury, probably the storehouse of the temple is right there, but they also have their dining room and their kitchen. When the priests, the Zadokite priests will sit down and eat their portions of the sacrificial meat.

Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:38:29 They have their own kitchen to prepare the final meal and their own dining room. So they will eat their part of the meat separate from the worshipers who are in the outer court. For Ezekiel, it's all about graded space. It's very hierarchical in that way. Very different vision than what Isaiah would have or what Latter-day Saints would do today. but this is what Ezekiel's describing. The final bit is the sanctuary itself. You have the courtyard right outside the sanctuary where there is the sacrificial altar. That is definitely there. But what is fascinating is what's not there. There's no laver. There's no washing basin in this particular temple courtyard, which we would expect to see based on Solomon's temple. That's not there. But what is there is the altar, and then you move past the porch into the sanctuary. The sanctuary is beautifully adorned on the inside with palm trees and cherub figures that have two faces, the human face and the lion face and really fascinating imagery inside the sanctuary.

Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:39:26	But the sanctuary itself is remarkably bare. You have these increasingly narrow rooms, the outer court, the inner court, the holy of holies. So you get narrower and narrower, the holier you get into the sacred space, but it's almost practically unfurnished. There's no menorah. There's no altar of incense. That stuff's just not there. What is there is one item that Ezekiel calls the table of the Lord. It's a table that's set in the holy place right before the Holy of Holies. And the holy of holies, of course, is itself empty. There is no Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies of Ezekiel's temple, which is really, really interesting. And I'll make a suggestion here as to why that is. Before we do, that's kind of the quick tour of the temple space.
Hank Smith:	01:40:10	Avram Shannon , he was here with us for Leviticus this year. I remember he said, "There is beauty in a well-run meeting. There is beauty in order." I'm hearing that. Look at this beautiful order and structure and designated space for... I just think it's...
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:40:28	Speaking to Ezekiel's Zadokite soul.
Hank Smith:	01:40:31	Yeah.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:40:33	For sure. John, you mentioned, so why the lack of furnishing? Why no menorah? Why no incense altar? Why no ark of the covenant? We would expect all those things based on Solomon's temple. The answer comes in chapter 43, because in chapter 43, and all this description, by the way, is all kind of intermixed with... So you have to unpack the whole section, chapter 40 through 48. But in part of this description, we get chapter 43, which describes the return of God's glory to this house. Once again, we see the chariot throne. We see the heavenly Harley. It's been in exile this whole time, but now with this rebuilt utopian idealized temple in Jerusalem or however you want to describe it geographically, now that it's been purified of all of the ritual impurities and we've kept the foreign elements out, now the God of Israel is ready to come again back into the temple. And so the chariot throne comes back from the east and the glory of God shoots down from the chariot throne and fills this house, fills this new temple.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:41:33	So it reminds me of that image in the Book of Revelation because very similar connection here with the New Jerusalem. In the Book of Revelation, you'll notice that the New Jerusalem has no sun, moon, and stars because the Lamb is the light of it. This is Ezekiel's version of that. You

don't need the menorah symbolizing the light of God. You don't need the Ark of the Covenant symbolizing the throne of God because God's glory has just filled this house. So God's presence is the light.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---|
| Hank Smith: | 01:41:57 | There's a beautiful drama to it. He's left and now he's back and you can hear the chariot coming and it's getting louder and it's coming back over the hill. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:42:06 | Exactly. The sound of rushing waters and the hum, this rumble from the undercarriage of the chariot throne. It's really a pretty cool image, but now the glory of God fills that temple. There's one more thing. In chapter 47, he gives us one more beautiful image. He describes that when God's glory had entered this temple and filled the house, he describes a river of life giving water that emerges from near where the altar is. Again, this is Ezekiel 47. The way he describes it is that this river of water that just brings life to whatever it touches starts out very small. It starts off as this trickle by the altar of this ideal temple. The glory of God is now in there. Once that glory is in there, this small river of water starts flowing outwards and it flows out to the east. Ezekiel describes this river of water going out from the temple complex itself, and it's almost like if we're trying to map it onto any kind of actual geography, it's almost like it's following the route of the Kidron Valley, which goes to the east of the Temple Mount, but then continues off to the east towards the Dead Sea through the Judean desert. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:43:13 | That's exactly what this river of life giving water does in Ezekiel's vision. Starts at the Temple Mount, then goes east and then seems to flow eastward, probably following the Kidron Valley as it winds to the east and goes over to the Dead Sea. But everywhere this water goes in a barren, dead, desert region, if you've ever been to the Judean desert out towards Qumran or Masada or that whole Judean wilderness area, it is barren out there. It's hard to imagine any real meaning outside of the occasional oasis, maybe Ein Gedi or something, hard to imagine this desert environment, anything other than kind of a space of death, the space of life doesn't flourish here because everywhere this river of life giving water goes, that barren space becomes lush, beautiful, life-filled space. As it's going out to the Judean desert, everything it touches, all of a sudden shrubs and plants and trees and fruit-bearing trees start growing along the banks. |

Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:44:11	It's creating a paradise out of what was once a dead region, a desert region, and it gets deeper and deeper as it goes. In fact, the angelic guide in this vision actually measures it out. He says, yeah, it starts off as just a little trickle, and then partway down, I'm up to my ankles and then partway down I'm up to my knees and now I'm up to my waist. And by the time I get out to the actual Judean wilderness, I can't even swim in this. It's almost impassable. But the point is that it's a river of flowing life-giving water that's bringing life to this region that had otherwise been dead. And the climax of that journey of this life-giving river is that it ultimately hits the Dead Sea, kind of like the Kidron Valley does eventually. It hits the Dead Sea, this Dead Sea that is called the Dead Sea because there's no fish, there's no life in it.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:44:57	It's just a repository of all the minerals and the salt that builds up, fleshes out from the Jordan River. The Dead Sea, which is known as a place of no life, all of a sudden becomes healed, meaning once the river touches it, the whole Dead Sea becomes a lush freshwater lake where life can exist again. In fact, life just immediately fills the Dead Sea to the point where there are whole schools of fish now and Ezekiel even describes, I saw fishermen with their nets along the shores of the Dead Sea, throwing their nets in and hauling in these large catches of fish. It's a symbol of everything that was once dead is now brought back to life in this beautiful, extraordinary way, and it all emanates from this rebuilt temple filled with the glory of the God of Israel, and this is how the vision culminates, vision of hope and restoration and healing, refreshing, renewal.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:45:52	There's one more chapter that does talk about the land divisions where different tribes will go and all that, and that's the vision that ends with... And this whole new space has a name, and that name is Yahweh Shammah, the Lord is here. That's the end of the vision. That's actually the end of the book of Ezekiel. The whole book ends with the Yahweh Shammah, the Lord is here. That's it. That's the vision. That Ezekiel's message of hope, which he gives, by the way, on his 50th birthday. We just spanned the entire priestly ministry of Ezekiel from the age 30 when he would start his priestly service to the age 50 when he would end his priestly service. We've gone from the chariot throne to this vision of an end times or idealized temple of some kind. And along the way, we have wrestled with some major interesting theological questions that Ezekiel is trying to make sense of, and he does it through his lens of a Zadokite priest who is filled with the Spirit and sees these remarkable things.

John Bytheway:	01:46:42	I'm just so glad it ends this way because it started so gloomy, and then you've got this restore, repair, like you said, Hank, and going back to a garden of Eden almost. The Lord is there. God is a restorer. He repairs and he fixes broken things. It's all going to be all right.
Hank Smith:	01:47:02	Matt, when someone like you comes and explains a book of scripture to me, I feel so uplifted. One, that I feel like I worship God with my heart, my mind and strength that I'm learning. And then to catch the vision, I guess, to catch the message that the God of Israel can restore all we've lost. We're in a miserable situation now, but one day, one day he's coming, everything he touches will turn into a paradise. That's beautiful.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:47:34	Yeah, thank you both John and Hank. You can definitely see why these visionary sections of Ezekiel here at the end especially will give hope to so many different groups who will read it later. Later groups of Jews who are in exile find meaning and purpose in this. Later groups who find themselves alienated from the Jerusalem Temple, or maybe because the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed will find meaning. And even if they find different approaches to this, really, this whole idea of regulating the temple, of keeping out the foreign elements, and that's going to resonate with Ezra. We rebuilt a temple and now divorce your foreign life. This idea of keeping foreigners out to maintain the purity of the temple.
Dr. Matthew Grey:	01:48:09	That's going to resonate with some groups and there'll be other visions, that material in Isaiah 56 through 66. It's almost like, but what if it's like this? What if it's like a house of God that actually has opened up to previously marginalized people? And then Isaiah actually says, like foreigners and eunuchs, groups who had been previously excluded, who Ezekiel wouldn't probably be comfortable with including, but what would a temple look like if we included these previously marginalized groups? So Isaiah has a very different view, but it turns out that these are all trying to fuel hopes for the future, even if those hopes look slightly different to different readers and different later groups resonate differently. If one group resonates with Ezekiel's vision, like the Ezra community, keep out the foreigners, Dead Sea Scroll communities definitely resonated with this kind of exclusionary hierarchy. But I can think of at least one powerful social movement in first century Judaism that did not, that resonated more with the Isaiah image of, well, what about those marginalized,

disenfranchised, disadvantaged peoples who God also loves?

- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:49:08 What if we reach out to them and envision a house of prayer for all of them? Of course, who are we talking about there?
- Hank Smith: 01:49:13 Yeah.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:49:14 That's the Jesus movement.
- Hank Smith: 01:49:15 Yeah, the Lord himself.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:49:16 When Jesus comes out and says, look, you guys need to read a lot more Isaiah than you do, he actually doesn't come out and say you need to read a lot more Ezekiel than you do.
- Hank Smith: 01:49:23 That's true.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:49:24 My epilogue is going to be this. So even if Jesus himself, and this is fast-forwarding down the road, this is centuries after Ezekiel, Jesus does seem to be a bit of an Isaiah guy, but there is one gospel who says, well, wait a second, what about this Ezekiel stuff though? Because Ezekiel stuff, there really is some good material here that can help us to better understand the person of Jesus, the Messiah. I'm not saying this is how Ezekiel intended it, but what I am saying is that there's one New Testament writer who really does mine Ezekiel's symbolic vision for stuff that he thinks can really highlight Jesus, and that writer is the gospel of John. In the Gospel of John, this is first century now, centuries after Ezekiel, but the gospel of John has a conviction that Jesus is the Messiah and that Jesus is the hope of redemption and the hope of restoration and the hope of all these things.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:50:14 And it turns out the gospel of John kind of likes some of the Ezekiel stuff. It's not a coincidence that in the Gospel of John, John talks about Jesus as the true vine and you are the branches. Well, that's an image that we would've seen in Ezekiel if we read some of those other chapters that we skipped, or the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who know the sheep by name, they hear his voice and he knows them by... That's Ezekiel 34. John does seem to be mining Ezekiel for some really beautiful images that he can apply to Jesus. One of the images that I think is so cool in the Gospel of John is how he mines Ezekiel's temple vision, Ezekiel 40-

48, for imagery that he applies to the person of Jesus. Even if it's not talking about the social hierarchies and the impurities, John does not go there, but what he does do is say, let me give you a portrait of Jesus that resonates with the hopes that Ezekiel had. For example, in the Gospel of John, Jesus is presented as inhabiting a body that is the temple.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|--|
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:51:13 | How does John 1 begin? In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God and the Word tabernacled or templed among us, taking the idea that, well, okay, Ezekiel, so you're hoping for an end times temple where the glory of God can return to earth one day and all. Well, let me tell you about another temple, the body of Jesus. In the beginning was the divine Word and the Word became flesh, took upon himself a human body and templed, tabernacled among us. That image of Jesus as the temple drawing upon Ezekiel's temple hopes, but it's in the person of Jesus. Jesus' body is the temple filled with the glory of God, just like Ezekiel envisioned a temple filled with God's glory off the chariot throne. But in John, it's Jesus's body is the temple, and he develops that theme throughout the entire gospel, that Jesus' body in John chapter two, tear down this temple and in three days I'll raise it again. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:52:10 | Jesus' body as the temple that houses the glory of God that has come down to dwell or to tabernacle among us. This is a theme that John will be developing throughout his entire portrait of Jesus, drawing upon language from Ezekiel's temple vision. The clincher is that in Jesus, as the body of Jesus is the temple housing the glory of God, starting with the Samaritan woman and concluding throughout the gospel, it's Jesus who says, and out of my temple body will come the rivers of life giving water. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:52:41 | Living water. Yeah. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:52:42 | Comes right from Ezekiel chapter 47. So when he says to the Samaritan woman, "I have waters, I am the source of living water," that's echoing Ezekiel chapter 47, the river of life giving water streaming from the temple. In John chapter seven, when Jesus is at the Jerusalem Temple for the Feast of Tabernacles, he shouts out, "I am the life giving water. Anyone who's thirsty, come to me and will drink." Thus, he's quoting scripture. Well, what's he quoting? Well, he seems to be at least paraphrasing Ezekiel 47, the river of life giving water coming from the side of the temple. Some of you probably can guess where I'm going with this, which is that |

John then concludes that imagery of Jesus' body as a temple filled the glory of God, offering the life giving water that we've seen in Ezekiel, and that culminates, of course, on the cross because in John's account of the crucifixion, the Roman takes the spear, plunges it into the side of Jesus, and what comes out from the side of Jesus's temple body, the river of water and blood.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|--|
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:53:38 | John just reframed the crucifixion from being a tragic moment of death and agony and suffering to the moment when the river of life giving water comes from the side of Jesus's temple body. It's the river of life giving water that Jesus can now provide on the cross as the rivers flow from his side, the side of that temple body that revivify a dead world, that revivify our lives and our hopes. Beautiful way of kind of reworking Ezekiel's temple vision, drawing on it, reframing it in the person of Jesus. By the way, there's one final way in which John does that, because you might remember that after Jesus' crucifixion and the resurrection in John 19 and 20, respectively, the gospel of John has an epilogue. The epilogue is the disciples trying to figure out how to go back to their old lives after the cross. They go to the Sea of Galilee and they're fishing and they can't find anything. |
| Dr. Matthew Grey: | 01:54:30 | They can't get anything in the nets until the resurrected Jesus appears on the seashore, then they cast their net into the water and it's the same language of the miraculous catch of fish from the Galilee that Ezekiel 47 used to describe the miraculous catches of fish at the Dead Sea when the river of water healed it. John really does take that image from Ezekiel's temple vision and integrates it into his portrait of Jesus from beginning to end. In the beginning was the Word, Word tabernacled among us. His glory filled the temple. His body was the temple. He's the offerer of life-giving water, water poured from his side at the cross. And how does the message conclude? With the disciples when the miraculous catch of fish in their renewal of life, their renewal of discipleship that draws upon the end of Ezekiel's temple vision of the healed world from Ezekiel 47. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:55:16 | Matt, that was fantastic. John, I know you love this as much as I do, where you sit in scripture and we go back and forth and I'm over here in Ezekiel making a note, and then I'm back over here in John making a note. That to me, this is uplifting and edifying. And not only that, then Matt, I understand a little bit better what Ezekiel was after. Then the application is so much more rich because how many of |

our listeners, John and ourselves and Matt, even the great Matt Grey has seen hard times all woven throughout this text is this life giver, this restorer, this healer, that I have not forgotten you, that I will return.

- John Bytheway: 01:56:00 Yeah, I went back to the primary song. I'm small, I know, but this is the part that reminded me, but wherever I go, the grass grows greener. This is living water, wherever he goes. Thank you Ezekiel for closing this way. And then Matt, for bringing this back to the book of John, he's going to make everything green again.
- Hank Smith: 01:56:24 That is the future reunions from the life giver are beautiful. Now, Matt, just to review, we've looked at wheels with eyes, heavenly Harleys, bread made over a fire of human dung, bones coming back to life, and then a temple the size of Mount Everest and the Dead Sea being healed. What a book.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:56:52 I think that approaching scripture study in a deeply substantive way can remind us that no, scripture content and context matter. In fact, they can deeply enhance your spiritual experience, so let's not separate them. Let's not pretend like they're just the simple things of the Spirit. No, the details matter. I mean, this book, we care about this book. We care about every inch of this book. We want to get to know it if it's a lifelong pursuit. It's the matter of having an informed faith and an informed discipleship on a very, very profound and deep level, and that really is personally transformative. And so I hope that I've been able to share some of that, at least from my experience with you as we've gone through this marvelous book of Ezekiel where we maybe could spend more time.
- Hank Smith: 01:57:29 Transformative is the right word. And Matt, just between the two of us and my relationship with you has been transformative for me. My teaching, the way I look at scripture, I'm very blessed to have Matt here.
- John Bytheway: 01:57:40 It thrills my soul when I see things that are hidden in plain sight, that how have I missed this? It makes you think that it wasn't just somebody sitting down and just stream of consciousness writing. This was labored over and inspired and those connections are the look at this, never saw that. So thank you, Matt.
- Dr. Matthew Grey: 01:58:01 Well, thanks guys. Really thank you for having me on again. It's always a delight to be with you guys and anytime you

want to read scripture together, more than happy to do it. I always look forward to that call.

- Hank Smith: 01:58:09 Yeah, this is what we do for fun here on followHIM. With that, we want to thank Dr. Matthew Grey for joining us today. What a pleasure. Transformative, that's the perfect word. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen. Thank you, Shannon, for giving us this chance. We want to thank our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. And every episode we remember our founder. This is what he was after right here, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We're heading into the book of Daniel on followHIM. As a thank you to our wonderful listeners, we'd love to gift you the digital version of our book, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It offers short, meaningful insights drawn from our past Old Testament episodes. Visit followHIM.co, that's followHIM.co, to download your free copy today, and you'll also find the link to purchase the print edition.
- Hank Smith: 01:58:59 Thank you for being part of our followHIM family. 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 Annabelle Sorensen.
- President Russell M. Nelson: 01:59:16 Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to him, follow him.

followHIM Favorites



- Hank Smith: 00:00:03 Welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story to go with each week's Come, Follow Me lesson. John, we're in Ezekiel this week, and as we were reading it, it gets pretty crazy. There is some wild symbolism in this book. And as I'm reading John, I thought of this phrase. Are you kidding me? Well then John, it made me remember a story. You know who Coach Kalani Sitaki is. He's the head coach of BYU football. He's an amazing guy. If you've ever met him in person, he is so kind and down to earth and really fun. Well, he gave a talk at BYU. I want you to hear the ups and downs of his life, kind of like the ups and downs that Israel has and God is guiding them, but they don't feel like he is. Well, here's a portion of his devotional.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:54 His life was going well, his childhood was going well. He was growing up in Hawaii and his parents, he said, "my life was disrupted. My parents decided to split and divorce." Now that's devastating, John, especially to a young child. He said, "My life was in complete disarray for two years. Siblings were separated, moved around to different family members. Grandpas, uncles, aunts all took turns having the children in their home. It was not stable. I lived in California, Utah, Hawaii. I never spent more than six months in one home. I was attending new schools. It made it hard to make friends. I missed living with my siblings." He said, "My parents were trying to figure out their plans. I missed them. I missed my family. Dealing with the divorce was difficult." He said, "I was broken. I didn't understand what was happening and I often blamed myself." He said eventually he ends up settling in Orem, Utah with his father.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:53 He was in fourth grade. John, the only thing this little boy loved was BYU football. Now, if you're a Utah fan, don't turn off the story here. I'm sure Kalani loves Utah football as well, but he said when he was a fourth grader, he loved BYU football. End of the year was 1984, the undefeated national championship year. Well, he said, "Imagine how I felt when the school announced that the national champions were

coming to visit Cascade Elementary. It felt too good to be true." He said they were signing autographs and taking pictures. He said, "I was so excited to be there, but I was still pretty sad. I had no confidence. I had no self-esteem. I missed my home. I missed Hawaii. I missed my mom. So I sat on the side to watch from a distance. One of the players noticed me, said, come join us.

- | | | |
|----------------|----------|---|
| Hank Smith: | 00:02:46 | I noticed he was motioning to me, so I quickly shook my head no. He started walking towards me and I froze. This was a big time player. In fact, he was my favorite player. I didn't know what he wanted or why he was coming to talk to me. He asked me a couple of questions and did most of the talking. Before he left to rejoin the group of students, he gave me a hug. It was different than anything I had felt before. I felt warm and I felt safe. He said to me, everything is going to be fine. I love you and God loves you. I had heard the words, everything is going to be fine or everything is going to be okay a thousand times before. This time I actually believed them. I decided that day I was going to play football for BYU and be just like that player, Vai Sikahema. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:03:33 | John, you know Vai. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:03:34 | Oh yeah. He's Elder Sikahema of the Quorum of the Seventy now, played for the Eagles, legendary punt returner super fast. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:03:42 | It's exactly what Kalani says here. He says Vai Sikahema wore number 23 at BYU and played running back and kick returner. 10 years later as a BYU freshman in 1994, I wore the number 23 in his honor and played running back just like him. He was the first Tongan to play in the NFL and he's now serving as a general authority of the church. Now John, he says, "I met Vai at one moment in my life. He said to my surprise, he didn't specifically remember meeting a shy nine-year-old at Cascade Elementary in Orem, Utah." Shocking that he wouldn't know that, but he was still grateful that he was responsive to spiritual promptings. All right, now we're going to fast-forward. Things were up and then they were down, but now they're back up. Things are good. Kalani plays. He goes to the NFL. He signed a contract. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:04:32 | He's going to play for the Cincinnati Bengals. "I went to bed that night," he said, "I knelt down and thanked God for everything, so much." He said, "Heavenly Father, I trust you. I'm ready to do so much good with this gift and |

opportunity." The next morning, I woke up sore, which was normal because of a surgery I'd had three years before, but today felt different. My body was not responding. He said, "I stretched. I took a hot bath. It was the first day of practice. I pled with my body to respond. It wasn't. There was something seriously wrong. They took me to the hospital for an MRI. There I sat alone and confused and nervous. I was told that my back was in horrible shape and continuing to play football would put me at risk of permanent damage. My football career was over. My dream had ended before it even started." So John, we've gone from up to down to back up to back down to back down, and he was upset.

Hank Smith:	00:05:40	A short time later in my hotel room, reality set in. I started to speak out loud to God. I was angry and I said things like, "Are you kidding me? What just happened? It was one of the most frustrating moments of my life. I felt abandoned, lonely, distraught, and I was broken again." Moving forward, John, he said, "What followed next were 15 years of highs and lows like we've been talking about. I made it through the lows and the highs were amazing. I became a loving husband, a doting father, a more appreciative son, a kinder brother, an empathetic friend." He said, "I got to coach a little football too." Then on December 19th, 2015, he was offered his dream job, head coach of the BYU football team. I spoke out loud to God again. "Are you kidding me? What just happened? I have the dream job I never knew I always wanted, but God knew." And then Kalani goes on to talk about divine design.
Hank Smith:	00:06:48	John, as I read Ezekiel, not only do I say, "Are you kidding me?" for the crazy stories that we read in here, but also the ups and downs of Israel where they're doing great and then they're scattered and then they're going to be okay. They're going to come back and then they're down again. As we've looked through the entire Old Testament this year, that has been Israel along the way being ups and downs and ups and downs, but God's there the whole time, teaching them, guiding them. And in the end, if you look at the end of Ezekiel, there is a dream temple from... I mean, how do you describe it, John? It's like the biggest, most beautiful, wonderful temple. It covers full mountains of this incredible temple that God eventually will give to Israel. The dream temple they never knew they always wanted.
John Bytheway:	00:07:38	And you can hear Ezekiel saying, "Are you kidding me? What just happened?"

Hank Smith:

00:07:43

Yeah. Hey, we hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. If you want to understand the book of Ezekiel, come over and listen to Dr. Matt Grey. He knows scripture as well as anyone I know, John. All of a sudden, the book of Ezekiel starts to make sense when you have a teacher like Matt walk you through it. Then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.