

# 2 Nephi 2

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## Counsel and Teachings to Jacob

### *2 Nephi 2:1–3*

1 And now, Jacob, I speak unto you: Thou art my firstborn in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness. And behold, in thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow, because of the rudeness of thy brethren.

2 Nevertheless, Jacob, my firstborn in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain.

3 Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi; and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God. Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer; for thou hast beheld that in the fulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men.

### *Comments*

As Nephi wrote this introduction to the New World creation of the Nephite people, he began by establishing that the conflict with Laman and Lemuel survived the journey across the ocean. One of the elements of the Old World stories of ethnogenesis, or the stories of the beginnings of a people or nation, is that they have an ancestral enemy. Nephi uses Laman and Lemuel in that function.

At this point, Nephi creates a new beginning. He notes that Jacob is the firstborn in the wilderness. While that was certainly true, it is perhaps mentioned to emphasize that Lehi is now dealing with a slightly different set of his sons. To this point, the blessings have been relatively short, but for Jacob and Joseph they will not only be extensive but provide great doctrinal expositions.

The enmity with Laman and Lemuel came across the ocean, but so did the gospel. As Lehi begins the blessing, Jacob is firmly associated with Nephi and with Yahweh. Given the focus of Lehi's preaching in Jerusalem, and all that we will see of Nephi in his two books, it is significant that Lehi specifically mentions that "I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of the Redeemer." The Messiah as redeemer is Lehi's message, and it is Nephi's message. The knowledge of the redeeming Messiah, that Nephi believed to have been lost in the Old World, is thus firmly established during the foundation of his people in the New World.

## The Ends of the Law and Atonement

### **2 Nephi 1:4**

4 And thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory; wherefore, thou art blessed even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh; for the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free.

#### *Comments*

Lehi says that Jacob has beheld Yahweh's glory. Later, Nephi says that both Nephi and Jacob have seen the Redeemer (2 Nephi 11:3). Although it is possible that this Jacob had seen the Savior by the time that Lehi spoke, it may not have yet happened. To behold the glory of God may not have required that Jacob had seen a vision of God. Regardless, it was clearly an important, especially a spiritually important experience.

The point of this introduction is not to emphasize the privilege of experiencing God, but to emphasize the blessing of Yahweh's redemption. Jacob is blessed, and all humankind will be blessed because the way has been prepared for their redemption since the fall of man.

Lehi's statement that salvation is free should be understood as a synonym for God's grace. The fall created issues for the eternal life of God's children, and so a solution to those issues was established even before it was needed. As the implications of the fall are upon all humankind, so too is this solution for the benefit of all mankind.

### **2 Nephi 2:5–6**

5 And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the law is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever.

6 Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

#### *Comments*

Lehi provides an important discourse on the nature of salvation, but it is densely worded. First, Lehi declares that "men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil." That is a critical foundation of God's plan of redemption. If humankind were unable to tell the difference between good and evil, no one could be held accountable for their choice of either. Thus, it is absolutely required that from the very beginning there be an eternal assurance that it was possible to make the distinction.

The experience of the world tells us that what different cultures in different times have considered good or evil becomes flexible around the edges of those concepts, but there are some human universals where all cultures instinctively understand, for example, that murder and incest are to be forbidden. Nevertheless, even when cultures define some things differently, each person has the opportunity to understand

good and evil according to their culture first, and some to add to their understanding the definitions that come from God rather than from man. In all cases, the Spirit of Christ can act as a testator to whether anything is right or wrong. The Spirit of Christ becomes that assurance that we are capable of discerning good from evil.

Lehi explains that we have a law given, but “by the law no flesh is justified.” That language references Paul when he spoke of the same principles (see Romans 3:20). On top of any culturally defined right and wrong, God has provided a law to define the actions that he defines as right or wrong. Thus, there is a way to be judged according to a law higher than cultural law. However, obedience to the law alone does not save.

When Lehi says that “by the temporal law they were cut off,” he refers to the fact that no human is perfect. That imperfect ability to follow all of God’s law requires, according to his justice, that we be cut off from his presence.

The only solution to this potential disaster is through the Atonement of the Holy Messiah, or Yahweh, who will come to earth to enact our redemption.

## ***2 Nephi 2:7–8***

7 Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

8 Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.

### *Comments*

Lehi’s discussion of the Atonement continues. He had mentioned that God had given laws, and now declares that Yahweh himself, in his mortal ministry, gave himself as a sacrifice for sin to answer the law. This imagery was powerful for an Israelite. They had been offering sacrifices for atonement since the law was given. Thus, Lehi places Yahweh the Messiah as paralleling the way Israelites already understood that the law could be reconciled. Just as a burnt offering would atone for the sin that separated Israel from their God, so this ultimate sacrifice atoned for the conditions that kept God and humankind separate.

During Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount, he indicated that the way we bring our sacrifices to God can alter their effectiveness (see Matthew 5:23–24). Thus, Lehi here teaches that the effectiveness of this ultimate sacrifice comes only to those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Salvation may be free, as Lehi indicated in 2 Nephi 2:4, but it is not without effort.

The message in verse 8, that the understanding of the redemption of humankind through the Redeeming Messiah should be made known to all of the inhabitants of the earth, is couched in language that could easily appear to be Christian and therefore out of place for Lehi. However, this is the message that Lehi and Nephi have preached from the beginning, and Nephi saw it as a restoration of a teaching that had been lost among those in Jerusalem. Importantly, as Lehi explains the Atonement he does so in terms that invoke the understanding of the law of Moses.

## **2 Nephi 2:9–10**

9 Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved.

10 And because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of him, to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him. Wherefore, the ends of the law which the Holy One hath given, unto the inflicting of the punishment which is affixed, which punishment that is affixed is in opposition to that of the happiness which is affixed, to answer the ends of the atonement—

### *Comments*

Lehi further links Jesus, as a sacrifice, to the law of Moses by noting that he is the “firstfruits unto God.” The law required a sacrifice of the first increase of the season. The Messiah was the first to rise from the dead, and therefore a first fruit which was dedicated to God. As a first fruit, the Messiah is in a position to mediate for all those who would follow, to make intercession for them.

As all humankind will die, so too must all appear before God, to be judged according to truth and holiness. Between merciful redemption and divine justice stands the Messiah as one who is able to provide the balance between the unbalanceable opposites of mercy and justice.

To explain this, Lehi will begin a discussion of why this difficult situation was also a part of the original plan for this world. He reiterates that there has been a law given, and that violation of the law will require punishment, and clearly punishment is an opposite of happiness. The next verses will elaborate this dichotomy and the reason why it is important.

## **2 Nephi 2:11**

11 For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one

body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.

### *Comments*

This is an oft-quoted verse, but one that is difficult to understand in spite of its familiarity. What is “a compound in one?” It is a critical understanding for why the plan for life on Earth required the plan for a fall and a redemption before ever the Earth was begun.

First, there must be an opposition in all things. Why? This returns to Lehi’s earlier statement in verse 5, that all men were instructed sufficiently to know good from evil. What would happen if humankind not only did not understand the difference, but that there was no difference? It is not simply part of the plan that we should know good from evil, but that we should actively choose good over evil.

As an example, let’s say we are presented with two manufactured objects which are identical, and we are asked, upon penalty of death, to choose the better of the two? How could we do it? It is impossible to make an intelligent choice if there is a discernible difference. Lehi declares that the plan assures both that there is a difference, so there is the possibility of choice, and also that we have the divinely declared ability to choose the good.

Why does this matter? Just as Lehi noted, the condition of the heart is important when approaching Christ’s atonement. Our heart is changed to align with God’s principles to the extent that we make active choices of the good. We become good, not by getting a perfect score on a multiple-choice test, but by changing our hearts so that we *are* good.

“A compound in one,” therefore, is an unchoosable choice, the antithesis of opposition in all things. It is a condition where our agency is invalidated because there is nothing to work with. If nothing is better or worse, we cannot be changed by our choices, because there is no choice to make. “A compound in one” has made the choices for us by eliminating the necessity to make a choice. Therefore we remain as dead, because the purpose of our life has been removed.

## **2 Nephi 2:12**

12 Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God.

### *Comments*

In English, the word “it” in “it must needs have been created for a thing of naught,” has no antecedent. Lehi doesn’t clearly define what “it” means. However, the context helps us understand. Because the context speaks of creation, it is possible to read this as the creation of the earth. However, it is probable that this

is too limited of a definition. Lehi has not been talking about a place, but of a process. Thus, the process would have been created for nothing. That process included the creation of the Earth, but transcends it. It is the entire plan of salvation that would have been worthless if there had been “a compound in one” (see the comments for 1 Nephi 2:11 for more on what “a compound in one means”). It would have been worthless, unless there were a division between good and evil.

Ultimately, the scriptural symbol that stands for this division is the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden, to which Lehi will refer later in this discourse. Prior to partaking of the Tree, Adam and Eve lived in a state of a “compound in one”, and it was only after initiating the difference, and particularly the understanding of that difference, that the ultimate plan of God would be in place.

Thus, if there was no difference between good and evil, if Adam and Eve had not eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, it would have destroyed “the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes.” It is the very fact that God had eternal purposes that the side effects of agency were tolerable. Agency not only meant that those eternal purposes could be fulfilled, but that humankind would inevitably fall short and be subject to the just punishment for the violation of the law. The mercy of God in the Atonement is as an enabling function. It allows for mercy and justice to be reconciled so that God’s eternal purposes might be accomplished.

## ***2 Nephi 2:13–14***

13 And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.  
14 And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon.

### *Comments*

The verbal nod to Paul continues. Paul also preached that there was no sin where there was no law (see Romans 5:13). The concept is that it is the law which provides the division between good and evil according to God’s perspective rather than the mortal relative concepts of good or evil. Sin is therefore defined as deviating from God’s law rather than from humankind’s. It is good to obey traffic laws, and bad to break them. It is not, however, a sin to disobey a traffic law. There are consequences imposed according to local governments, but it doesn’t reach the level of sin, which distances humankind from God. It is in

that light that Lehi says that if there is no sin there is no righteousness. The law that in its breach might be sin, can in its observance, lead us to righteousness.

It is an astounding theological concept to suggest that if there is no agency there is no God. Surely God's existence is independent of our actions. While that is true, Lehi declares that agency is also fundamental to understanding who God is. It is so much a part of God that were there no agency, we would not have the God that we do. We would not have the Earth, for God created it as a location for the exercise of agency to choose. This is the meaning of the idea that humankind is placed on earth to act. We are also acted upon, for the agency of others will inevitably affect our own.

After the negative assertions that an absence of agency would mean an absence of God and his creations, Lehi turns to the positive statement. We need not worry about those negative possibilities, for, as Lehi says: "there is a God, and he had created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon."

## The Purpose of the Fall

### **2 Nephi 2:15–16**

15 And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter.

16 Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.

### *Comments*

Lehi moves his discourse from the general principles to the specific enactment of those principles. He moves from the general theology to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden. He had mentioned that God created the earth, and now Lehi will explain how that creation enabled the conditions of agency.

Lehi had preached that there should be an opposition in all things in verse 11, and now uses that concept to describe the Garden. In Lehi's description, however, the trappings of the Garden itself are ignored. For Lehi, it is a story of two trees, and two trees that stand in opposition to each other. The creation of our first parents is mentioned, but along with that creation "it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life." At the very beginning, the essentiality of potential duality and agency was built into our existence. Remember that Lehi had recently noted that without this duality and agency there would be no purpose in the creation of the earth or the plan for the earth.

Thus, it is consistent that this principle of agency be embedded from the very beginning, simultaneous with the creation of our first parents.

The point of the opposition of the two trees was to create within the Garden the possibility of choice. At the very beginning, the opposing trees mark the existence of the possibility of good and evil. While the story emphasizes the choice that was made, the symbolic point was that God had never left them without agency.

It is also interesting to note that the way the trees are described is that one was sweet, and the other was bitter. The way in which the adjectives line up, it is the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge that is bitter. Indeed, the result of eating that fruit was to be cast into the lone and dreary world. There is, however, the implicit promise that when we are restored to the Tree of Life we will be restored to the sweet.

## ***2 Nephi 2:17–18***

17 And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God.

18 And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

### *Comments*

As part of the universe of opposites, Lehi introduces an angel who is in opposition to God. The descriptions of this angel as the devil probably are due to the language of Christianity with which Joseph Smith was familiar, but the idea of a Satan as a figure in opposition to God was part of Israelite understanding. Satan was a heavenly accuser, best seen in the prologue to the story of Job. The fall from heaven symbolizes opposition to God, being outside of God's influence and, therefore, purposes.

What is it that Satan the accuser sought that was evil before God? In this case, evil is the opposite of good, hence Satan seeks evil in that he is one of the poles of the opposing pair. When Satan falls from heaven, he became miserable forever, for he was outside of God's plan that resolved the opposition between good and evil. The misery that Satan sought was to place humankind outside of God's influence. Hence, when Satan tempts Adam and Eve to partake of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the impetus was to create sin.

When Satan promised that Eve would not die, but be as God, it was only partially true. The eating of the fruit, and the knowing of the difference between good and evil, was required. The only way that would be effective was if they would not ultimately die, so what Satan promised was true, but it was not a truth that Satan could produce. It was a truth available only through the redeeming Messiah.



## **2 Nephi 2:19–21**

19 And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth.

20 And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth.

21 And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents.

### *Comments*

As Lehi recounts the story of humankind’s beginnings, he emphasized the choice and the fact that they made that choice in the face of opposition. The point was that the choice was made, and the role of the Satan in the process was incidental.

The result of the choice was the beginning of humanity as we know it. They were driven from the Garden and began the necessities of life. They tilled the ground in order to bring forth and support life. They brought forth children who became “all of the inhabitants” of the Earth. They began to put God’s plan into effect.

There was still the lingering problem resulting from eating the fruit. Our choices have consequences, and this primordial choice had the consequence of mortality. To further the ability of humankind to properly develop the attributes of heaven, God gave them laws. Importantly, along with the law was the possibility of repentance. That there would be a need for repentance was a given. The fact that repentance was possible was the result of God’s grace. All humankind was in a position where its actions might separate it from God’s influence, perhaps similar to how the angel who became the devil was separated from God’s influence. That undesired effect required remedy, and repentance was the remedy. That repentance is available only through the Messiah’s redeeming sacrifice. Lehi is leading up to that explanation, but he has more to say about our mortal condition before he does.

## **2 Nephi 2:22–24**

22 And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.

23 And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin.

24 But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

## *Comments*

Lehi not only emphasizes the principle of opposition, he demonstrates it with both positive and negative aspects. The positive result of the opposition resulted in the beginnings of all humanity. Lehi now explains the negative aspect. What would have been the result if no choice had been exercised, if Adam and Eve had not used their agency to implement God’s plan to choose good over evil?

The result would have been “a compound in one” (see comments on 2 Nephi 2:11 for a discussion of the meaning of this phrase). It is expressed by saying that they would have remained in the Garden of Eden. This is important, because much of modern Christianity reads the story of the Garden with wistful longing for a lost paradise. Perhaps that is natural, but it isn’t what Lehi understood to be the function of the Garden. According to Lehi, the function of the Garden was never to be a residence, but rather a proving ground. It was not a place to keep, but one to change. The presence of the opposing trees points to this very instability built into the Garden.

The two trees were not only opposites but represented undesirable outcomes. To eat of the Tree of Life was to have never-ending (physical) life, but at the same time, to be ignorant of the important knowledge of God. To eat of the Tree of Knowledge was to gain that essential knowledge, but to lose one’s life. Neither was the correct choice. They were intentionally created to be unstable, to require a resolution that allowed for the desired outcome—to have eternal life with the knowledge of good and evil that God desires for us.

Perhaps too much has been made of Adam and Eve not having children in the Garden. It is often presented as an argument for the need for a Fall, but in Lehi’s exposition it is a description of the result rather than a cause. The world as we know it, as God designed it, came into effect only after the Fall. The children populate the world, and they inherit the ability to make choices between good and evil. That plan could not be operational in the Garden.

Did Adam or Eve sin when they partook of the fruit of the Tree of Life? It is not a relevant question, as there was no knowledge of good and evil before they did. Without the law, Lehi told us that there was no sin, and the law is not imposed until after we have the ability to live it through our choices. Lehi would have seen the discussion of whether or not they sinned as irrelevant to the important lesson of the Garden.

## **The Purpose of Adam’s Fall**

### ***2 Nephi 2:25***

25 Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

## *Comments*

Lehi’s concluding statement about the events of the Garden of Eden is well known. When “Adam fell that men might be”, what did Lehi mean? It is possible to contrast this statement with the statement that

“Adam and Eve would not have had children”, and that is certainly a part of what he meant. However, Lehi’s interests are not in the temporal, but in the spiritual meaning. When Lehi says that Adam fell that men might be, he did not mean only that it was physically possible for them to be born, but that God’s plan for his children could be implemented.

The evidence for this reading is the conclusion. When humankind is, it is for a purpose—which is that it might have joy. Understanding what Lehi meant by having joy requires that we remember the context in which these words were spoken. This is Lehi’s exposition on choice, and the necessity of having opposites. He has, more than once, contrasted misery and happiness. Thus, when he speaks of joy, we should understand it in the implied context of its opposite, eternal misery.

Lehi had described the fallen angel as miserable in opposition to God. Thus, if humankind is to have joy, it is part of eternal opposition. We are not to belong to the fallen angel, but to belong to God, to become like God, and to participate in the joy of God.

## The Messiah Provides Agency

### ***2 Nephi 2:26–27***

26 And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

27 Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

### *Comments*

The plan of God cannot be completed while humanity exercises choice, and humanity could be eternally condemned for that choice. Repentance is one of the greatest gifts of God but could not be available unless there was a reconciliation between justice and mercy. This is where Lehi reinforces the sacrificial mission of the mortal Messiah. He does not state it explicitly, but it is an underlying theme from the beginning of this discourse. Israel already understood that a sacrifice could redeem humanity from sin. The Messiah, who would come in Lehi’s future and our past, provided that atoning sacrifice.

Thus, the fitting conclusion to the story of the creation of God’s plan for his children lies in the ability of the Messiah to make it effective, to reconcile the imbalance of the Trees. Only through the Atonement could God’s children have the chance to have the desired combination of eternal life and Godly knowledge of good and evil.

Thus, in Lehi's words, "men are free according to the flesh." That is, in mortality, we have the agency to choose. We can choose good or evil, and eternal life or eternal death. Lehi personifies the choice as one between God and the fallen angel. Lehi used the Mediator, or the Messiah, as the representative for God, and modern readers should remember that Lehi understood Yahweh to be his God, and to be the very one who would condescend to become mortal and to bring about the Atonement.

## ***2 Nephi 2:28–30***

28 And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

29 And not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom.

30 I have spoken these few words unto you all, my sons, in the last days of my probation; and I have chosen the good part, according to the words of the prophet. And I have none other object save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls. Amen.

### *Comments*

The beginning of this discourse addressed Jacob, but it ends with an address to all of Lehi's sons. The message is not for a single person, but for all humanity. All need to understand the purpose of life, that the importance of the redeeming Messiah is the purpose of our existence.

Lehi's sons are exhorted to look to the Messiah. They must look forward to a time promised, but not yet arrived. The theme of needing to look forward to a promised time will be repeated by later Book of Mormon prophets. The Messiah would not come for nearly six hundred years, but the important aspect of his coming was the divine promise that the sacrifice would occur and that the demands of justice and mercy would be reconciled through this firstfruits offering. The divine promise of the future allowed for the possibility of repentance even before that sacrifice occurred.

Lehi's sons are faced with the choices he listed in his discourse. They have the ability to choose good or evil, and he exhorts them to choose eternal life over eternal death. While that does not appear to be a difficult choice when we hear it in the context of a sermon, it becomes much more difficult when it arises in the small actions and choices of everyday life.