

2 NEPHI 11–25

John W. Welch Notes



2 Nephi 11–12

2 Nephi 11:2–3 — Nephi Establishes His Word in the Mouth of Three Witnesses

Nephi begins this long section, which he quotes from the book of Isaiah, by saying that his “soul delights in the words of Isaiah” (see also how Nephi repeats these words in 2 Nephi 25:5). He says that he will liken these words unto his own people and send them forth because Isaiah “verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him, and my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him.” This produces three witnesses: Isaiah, Nephi, and Jacob.

Nephi is doing this on purpose, because “by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word.” Nephi is probably thinking of Deuteronomy 17:6 or 19:15 that requires that “at the mouth [or by the words] of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.” This was a well establish point of Jewish law (see 2 Corinthians 13:1). Nephi legally qualifies them all as witnesses by establishing that each of them comes as an eyewitness. Isaiah, Jacob, and Nephi have each “seen” their Redeemer. Nephi will mention this important three-witness principle again in 2 Nephi 27:12, as will Moroni later on (see Ether 5:4; Moroni 6:7; 10:4).

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Can Textual Studies Help Readers Understand the Isaiah Chapters in 2 Nephi?](#) (2 Nephi 11:8),” *KnoWhy* 39 (February 23, 2016).

2 Nephi 11–25 — Introduction: The Nephite Prophetic View

Getting through this large block of Isaiah material is notoriously challenging. But back in 1 Nephi 11–14, Nephi developed a framework which has been called “the Nephite prophetic view,” which can be a great aid in understanding what Isaiah is saying. Taking Nephi as your guide is your best chance of success. Nephi’s four stages are apparent as the four chapters, 1 Nephi 11, 12, 13 and 14, divide naturally into these four stages:

Stage 1: Christ’s coming (1 Nephi 11)

Stage 2: his rejection and the scattering of the Jews (1 Nephi 12)

Stage 3: the day of the Gentiles (1 Nephi 13)

Stage 4: the restoration of Israel and the ultimate victory of good over evil (1 Nephi 14)

In 2 Nephi 12–14, Nephi uses Isaiah as a witness to the visions of the future that he had also received from the Lord. Nephi will then interpret these Isaiah passages in 2 Nephi 25–30, following this same four-stage pattern. But in Isaiah’s case, elements of these four stages are scattered among Isaiah’s recorded sayings. Many of Isaiah’s prophecies were short sayings, several of which have been combined into one long scrapbook of the words of Isaiah, which was only divided into chapters much later.

Watch for the development of these same four stages in Nephi’s selection of Isaiah prophecies. As a handy guide to Isaiah 2–14, notice how the following statements by Isaiah can be easily clustered under each of Nephi’s four stages:

Stage 1. The coming of Jesus Christ among the Jews and his rejection because of priestcrafts

7:10–16	A sign is given of the birth of Immanuel (see also 1 Nephi 11:13–18), but the land will be forsaken
7:17–25	The land of Judah will be desolate, filled with briers
8:1–8	“As this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah” (v. 6) they will be overrun
8:9–40	Those who counsel against God will come to naught
8:11–18	The Lord will be a “sanctuary” for some, but “a stone of stumbling” for others (v. 14); “I will look for [the Lord]” (v. 17)

9:1–7	A “great light” has shined, “for unto us a son is given” (v. 6)
9:8–17	The proud will be devoured, for they do not seek the Lord; their leaders “cause them to err” (v. 16; see also 2 Nephi 10:5; Isaiah 3:12), and they that follow them are destroyed (cf. 2 Nephi 10:6)

Stage 2. Jews will be scattered and smitten, will suffer in contention and darkness, but the Lord will not forget them

3:1–4:1	The stay will be taken away from Judah; Jerusalem will be ruined; proud men and women will fall
5:1–25	“What could I have done more [for] my vineyard?” (v. 4); “my people are gone into captivity” (v. 13); the anger of the Lord is against his people, but he will still lift up an ensign for them (vv. 25–26)
6:1–12	How long will they not understand? Until the land is “utterly desolate” (v. 11)
8:18–22	Those with no light in them will be driven to darkness
9:18–21	“No man shall spare his brother” (v. 19); all will be against each other (see also 1 Nephi 12:21); but the Lord’s “hand is stretched out still” (v. 21)

Stage 3. In the day of the Gentiles, a remnant will be summoned and gathered again

5:26–30	He will “lift up an ensign to the nations” (v. 26); “they shall come with speed” (v. 26)
6:13	A portion will return
10:20–23	The remnant of Israel will return
11:10–16	An ensign will stand for the Gentiles; the Lord will recover the remnant a second time from the islands of the sea and from all the nations

Stage 4A. In the day of God’s judgment, the wicked will be destroyed, and concurrently 4B. God’s righteousness will be victorious

Stage 4A

2:6–9, 11	Idolatry in the land will be destroyed
2:12–22	The lofty “shall be brought low” (v. 12)
10:1–19	In the day of visitation, God will punish the wicked and will “burn and devour [them] in one day” (v. 17)
10:24–34	The Lord will “stir up a scourge” (v. 26) and lop off the haughty bough with terror (see v. 33)
13:1–22	“The day of the Lord is at hand” (v. 6); he will destroy the sinners and cause arrogance to cease (see v. 11); God will destroy the wicked speedily
14:9–28	“Hell ... is moved” (v. 9); Lucifer is fallen, cast out like a great and “abominable branch” (v. 19); See Book of Mormon Central, “Why Did Lehi ‘Suppose’ the Existence of Satan?” (2 Nephi 24:12),” <i>KnoWhy</i> 43 (February 29, 2016).

Stage 4B

2:1–5	The Lord’s house and peace will be established; See Book of Mormon Central, “Has the Prophecy of the Lord’s House Established in the Mountains been Fulfilled?” (2 Nephi 12:2),” <i>KnoWhy</i> 41 (February 25, 2016).
2:10–11	“The Lord alone shall be exalted” (v. 11)
4:2–6	The branch of the Lord will be beautiful; a tabernacle will be in Jerusalem, “cloud... by day” and a “fire by night”
11:1–9	“A rod [will grow] out of the stem of Jesse” (v. 1) and will judge the earth with righteousness; the wolf and the lamb shall dwell in peace, and “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (v. 9)
12:1–6	The righteous will be comforted; “God is my salvation”; “with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation”
14:1–8	“the Lord will have mercy” and choose Israel; they will return to their lands (v. 1); “the whole earth is at rest” (v. 7)
14:29–32	Zion is established

Studying 2 Nephi 12–24 this way, see how many more words of Isaiah you can relate to Nephi’s four main prophetic stages. This approach offers power in not only interpreting the words of Isaiah, but also analyzing the prophetic outlook of all writers in the Book of Mormon who follow in Nephi’s tradition. The writings of Isaiah are puzzling for all modern readers, but the fact that Isaiah’s complicated overall scheme goes hand in hand with Nephi’s world-view adds additional credence to Nephi’s testimony that he and Isaiah were talking about the same things. In 2 Nephi 25–30, Nephi’s use of Isaiah in light of his prophetic overview will make coherent sense of these impossibly difficult passages. That is no small feat. See if using this interpretive tool doesn’t make your reading of these Isaiah chapters your best time through them ever.

Further Reading

John W. Welch, “[Getting through Isaiah with the Help of the Nephite Prophetic View](#),” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 19–45.

Book of Mormon Central, “[What Vision Guides Nephi’s Choice of Isaiah Chapters?](#) (2 Nephi 11:2),” *KnoWhy* 38 (February 22, 2016).

Book of Mormon Central, “[Who Are the Witnesses of Christ in 2 Nephi?](#) (2 Nephi 11:2–3),” *KnoWhy* 37 (February 19, 2016).

2 Nephi 11:2–8 — Isaiah’s Influence on Nephi’s World

Isaiah was active as a prophet of Judah living in Jerusalem from 740–701 BC. Lehi and Nephi left Jerusalem approximately 100 years after Isaiah’s death. This may sound like a long time later, but if you consider it in the context of generations, it is only two to three generations later. When Lehi was a young boy, there may have been people alive who remembered the Prophet Isaiah, just as there were still people alive in late pioneer Utah, in the early 1900s, who could tell children what it was like to listen to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Nephi likely thought of Isaiah as The Prophet, much as we think of Joseph Smith as The Prophet. Isaiah was that important.

Further Reading

David Rolph Seely, “[Nephi’s Use of Isaiah 2–14 in 2 Nephi 12–30](#)” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 151.

2 Nephi 11:2 — Nephi’s Love of Isaiah

When Nephi wrote these passages, he was without his father. Nephi would have rejoiced in knowing that there is a plan, that the covenant of the Lord was still firm, that his arm was outstretched, that his people were not going to be forgotten, and that even the isles of

the sea would not be ignored. Think about being desperately in need of that kind of comfort. We can see why these texts of Isaiah would have meant the world to Nephi.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why is the Lord's Hand 'Stretched Out Still'? \(2 Nephi 19:12\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 49 (March 8, 2016).

2 Nephi 11:2 — How Much Did Isaiah Know about Christ and His Suffering?

When approaching the question of how much the prophets of the Old Testament knew of the Savior's life, consider Psalm 22. This Psalm was used in the temple (and remember, Isaiah was a temple priest and would have received his call to be a prophet in the temple). Psalm 22 begins, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" You will recognize these as words that Jesus spoke from the cross. Usually, when we read these words in the accounts of Christ's crucifixion in the Gospels, we think that it is the end of the story—that Jesus feels as though He has been completely abandoned and left alone.

However, for the ancient Israelites, the opening lines of many of the Psalms were a lot like the opening lines of our hymns. If someone were to hang on a cross and say, "Come, come ye saints," we would know that "no toil nor labor fear" was next. Even if there was toil and labor that the person was called to endure, there would be a positive feeling because we would know that the next line was, "with the saints we shall dwell." We must consider the totality of the hymn in order to understand what was encompassed by and symbolized by that one, opening line. Christ knew this Psalm and knew how it symbolized Him. Likely, all the prophets knew much of what the Savior would have to endure from this hymn alone.

Further Reading

Terry B. Ball, "[Isaiah's 'Other' Servant Songs](#)," in *The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, The 38th Annual BYU Sidney B. Sperry Symposium (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 207–218.

Book of Mormon Central, "[Can Textual Studies Help Readers Understand the Isaiah Chapters in 2 Nephi?](#) (2 Nephi 11:8)," *KnoWhy* 39 (February 23, 2016).

2 Nephi 13

2 Nephi 13:16 — The Daughters of Zion Are Lifted Up in Pride

The daughters of Zion can symbolize members of the church who are in the covenant with God, regardless of gender. David Seeley wrote an article in the book entitled, *Isaiah*

in the *Book of Mormon*, explaining that the main lesson we learn from the Isaiah chapters in the *Book of Mormon* is to avoid haughtiness and pride manifested in every imaginable way. Isaiah was warning the people of his day. You would think we would get the message—it is still pertinent.

Further Reading

David Rolph Seely, “[Nephi’s Use of Isaiah 2–14 in 2 Nephi 12–30](#)” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 156–164, esp. 164: “Isaiah looks into the future and sees the destruction of a series of nations and peoples, and in each case he cites pride as the cause of their rejection of the Lord and of their eventual scattering and destruction. In his own prophecy about the history of the Jews, Lehitites, and gentiles, Nephi also identifies, often in the language of Isaiah, the main challenge that each of these groups faces as pride.”

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Does Nephi Use Isaiah to Teach Us to Avoid Pride?](#) (2 Nephi 15:21),” *KnoWhy* 48 (March 7, 2016).

2 Nephi 15

2 Nephi 15:1–7 — Isaiah Saw the Great Apostasy

Isaiah saw there would be a falling away after the Lord established his church. Does that mean that the Lord did not do a good enough job? No. We see in Isaiah’s allegory, recorded in 2 Nephi 15, that the Lord did all he could to save the choice vine.

The vineyard represented the world. A choice vine was planted in the vineyard, representing the House of Israel. The Lord did all he possibly could. He built a wall to protect the vineyard, and he built a tower in the vineyard, perhaps symbolic of the temple. He hoped that the plant would bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild ones—even though he had already built a wine press. There may be an allusion to the Garden of Gethsemane and the press of the atonement in this allegory. No stone was left unturned by the Lord. Literally, he took all of the stones out of the vineyard. He made it as productive as he could. He gave it every possible chance, but it still produced wild fruit.

The Lord’s covenant people would not become domesticated. Maybe they were too interested in the ways of the world. They (and we) are influenced too much by the culture of the world. This account is one of many references to the way in which the Lord does everything he possibly can for his vineyard. We will see more of this theme again, when we get to Zenos’ parable in Jacob 5.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[What are the Roots of Zenos's Allegory in the Ancient World? \(Jacob 5:3\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 70 (April 4, 2016).

2 Nephi 15:26 — The Lord Will Call His People Back

The Lord will remember the covenants he has made with his people. Verse 26 says that he will lift up an ensign. He will hiss or whistle to them to call them back. The Lord is not angrily hissing—he is reaching out in love to his children and fulfilling his promises. The ensign will be erected; it will be a gathering point and a rallying post that will bring people back together so that, in the end, the Lord will be victorious.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Do Early Nephite Prophets Speak about the Scattering of the Jews? \(2 Nephi 15:13\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 42 (February 26, 2016).

2 Nephi 16

2 Nephi 16:1 — Isaiah Receives His Prophetic Call

Isaiah recorded his experience in receiving his prophetic call: "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Can you envision that? Does it remind you of Lehi's vision in 1 Nephi 1:8, where he saw "God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels [the train that filled the temple] in the attitude of singing and praising their God."

Isaiah was in the temple, in the Holy of Holies, and he saw the Lord. If Isaiah saw the Lord, there must have been some reason for the Lord to come to Isaiah. The Lord does not make cameo appearances. We do not know what he told Isaiah. In the First Vision of Joseph Smith, Joseph was told many things. We only know a few of them. The Lord may have explained to Isaiah the basic Plan of Salvation, his mission, what the Lord would do, and how it would be part of the ministry of Isaiah to declare at least part of this message to others.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[How Did God Call His Prophets in Ancient Times? \(1 Nephi 15:8\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 17 (January 22, 2016).

Stephen D. Ricks, "Heavenly Visions and Prophetic Calls in Isaiah 6 (2 Nephi 16), the Book of Mormon, and the Revelation of John," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 171–190.

2 Nephi 16:2–4 — Isaiah Sees Seraphim

In verse 2 we read, "And above [the throne] stood the Seraphim." These were bright, burning beings, and it looked as though each one had six wings. I do not imagine these were actual wings, but maybe flames. How else do you describe a flame? The flames would look like wings. These were glorious, radiant beings. Two "wings" covered their faces, two covered their feet, and two were used to fly. One cried to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts [the pillars] of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." The smoke was probably incense, or perhaps some kind of smoke connected with the fire at the altar.

2 Nephi 16:5–7 — Isaiah Protests That He Is "a Man of Unclean Lips"

Isaiah stated, "Wo is unto me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Unclean lips! That was the first thing that Isaiah felt self-conscious about in the presence of God. He was a prophet. His main tool was speech. Isaiah spoke, and yet felt that his voice was unclean or inadequate. It is an interesting warning that even though we do all the right things and we go through the right motions, if our lips and our thoughts are not pure, we will strongly feel shame in the presence of God. We need to be clean—every whit.

Isaiah's concern with his unclean lips is then addressed: "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand." This coal was some kind of a burning ember. It may have been a piece of burning wood. I doubt that they had charcoal briquettes or even coal. It may have been hot ashes. Nonetheless, the seraph had something very hot in his hand, "which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; And he laid it upon my mouth, and said: Lo, this has touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

How did people living in ancient times determine whether or not a witness was telling the truth? How could they know whether to rely on the veracity or truthfulness of the testimony of a witness? We know from some ancient Near Eastern texts that "trial by ordeal" was used in situations where it was difficult to determine if a witness was speaking truth during his testimony at trial. Any person who strongly questioned whether a particular witness was telling the truth could challenge that witness and force him to submit to a specified "ordeal." Something very hot (a hot spatula or coal) was put

on the tongue of the witness. If the witness was hurt or injured during the ordeal, it was considered to be evidence that he was lying. The reasoning was that someone who is lying would have a dry mouth and tongue. Therefore, a liar would not be able to tolerate something hot placed on his tongue. It would hurt a lot and cause physical damage. However, if the witness was telling the truth, he would be relaxed and his tongue would be coated with saliva to prevent the heat from searing and hurting his tongue. This operated like a type of primitive lie detector test.

I wonder if Isaiah saw himself being subjected to this type of ordeal. He passed the test. Isaiah was sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and his sins were forgiven. This is one of the responsibilities of the Holy Ghost, is it not?

This experience was symbolic. I do not believe Heavenly Father was chastising Isaiah with a negative message like, "You bad, evil, child. Let me cleanse you." I think Heavenly Father was comforting Isaiah and addressing his concerns or doubts about his ability to preach repentance to the people in Jerusalem. The Lord was telling Isaiah that he was forgiven of his sins and that he would receive divine assistance in his personal ordeals as he preached truth. It reminds me of Enoch's doubts when he was called as prophet. Enoch knew that he was slow of speech and questioned why he would be called as a prophet. We all feel inadequate about these types of callings, and Isaiah was no exception.

Further Reading

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God's Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014), 36: "Obvious similarities with the calls of Moses and Jeremiah present themselves in this verse. Moses responds to his call as follows: 'Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?' Later Moses objects more specifically in saying that he was 'slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.' Jeremiah complains by saying: 'Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.' Enoch combines the objections of Moses and Jeremiah, adding that 'all the people hate me.'"

Blake T. Ostler, "[The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis](#)," *BYU Studies* 26 no. 4 (1986): 72, 83.

2 Nephi 16:8–10 — The Lord Calls Isaiah to be a Prophet

The Lord asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah answered the call, "Here am I; send me." As recorded in Abraham 3:27, this is identical to the words spoken by the Savior in the premortal council as He accepted the call to perform the

Atonement as Savior of mankind: “Here am I, send me.” Isaiah was willing to make whatever sacrifice was necessary to fulfill his calling as prophet.

The Lord then instructed Isaiah: “Go and tell this people—Hear ye indeed, but they understood not; and see ye indeed, but they perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes—lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and be healed.” The Lord explained that the people in Jerusalem were not ready or worthy to be told everything in plain language. Isaiah would be prophesying at a time when Israel would be destroyed.

These verses explain why many people today find it difficult to understand the words of Isaiah. Isaiah was simply magnifying his calling as instructed by the Lord. He had been told to make his writings and teachings opaque—without absolute transparency. But, as Nephi would later explain, Isaiah’s prophecies would become clear to those who have “ears to hear.”

2 Nephi 16:11–12 — Isaiah Inquires How Long He Should Preach to the People

After Isaiah’s mission was explained to him, he enquired, “Lord, how long?” Is this a two-year call, an 18-month mission? The Lord answered, “Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate: And the Lord have removed men far away, for there shall be great forsaking in the midst of the land.” This was, of course, prophesying of the remaining tribes being taken into captivity. How would you like to be called with the knowledge that your efforts would not change or make much difference?

2 Nephi 16:13 — What Is the Symbolism of the Tree and the Holy Seed in Isaiah’s Prophecy?

Finally, the prophecy in verse 13 undoubtedly gave Isaiah some hope that the House of Israel would not be lost forever: “But yet there shall be a tenth, and they shall return.” So, here is the hope. There will be a tithing, one tenth, or a remnant who will return to Jerusalem at a future time. The prophecy continues, stating that when the remnant return, it “shall be eaten, as a teil-tree, and as an oak whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves; the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

There is much symbolism in this passage. Even though during winter time a tree without its leaves may appear to be dead, there is still life in it. Similarly, even though it may appear like the House of Israel is desolate and dead, without further seed or progeny, there will be a remnant that will return and bring life back to the land and its people. From this remnant will come a “seed” or the promised Messiah, who will bring

life back all-together (to all people). I think this Isaiah passage was perhaps alluding to Psalm 22, which is one of David's Messianic Psalms.

2 Nephi 17

2 Nephi 17:3 – The Covenant Meaning Behind the Name of Isaiah's Son

Isaiah gave the name of his son as "Shearjashub," which has been proposed to mean "a remnant shall return." Perhaps this was not a birth name, but maybe a bar mitzvah or a covenant name. The covenant of the Lord was that a remnant would return.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Onomasticon, "[Shearjashub](http://onoma.lib.byu.edu)," online at onoma.lib.byu.edu.

Roseann Benson and Shon D. Hopkin, "[Finding Doctrine and Meaning in the Book of Isaiah](#)," *Religious Educator* 15, no. 1 (2014): 107–109.

2 Nephi 17:14 – A Virgin Will Conceive

Some scholars have disagreed on the meaning of this prophecy in Isaiah—specifically how to interpret the condition of the woman who would conceive the Messiah. The original word in Greek describing the woman is *parthenon*. This is normally interpreted as "a virgin" but can also mean "a young girl." In the ancient world, women married at a young age and would be young when they conceived. Christians, of course, view this as a prophecy about the virgin birth of Christ. In the Greek world, the word *parthenon* clearly indicated virginity. However, that was not necessarily the interpretation in Hebrew.

It is important to understand that Isaiah was prophesying that there was going to be something really unusual about this birth. If it were just a girl getting pregnant, that would not be very extraordinary—there would not be much to this prophecy. However, Isaiah's prophecy indicated that this was going to be a special birth in some way. It was similar to other prophecies of unusual births in ancient scripture—like saying that an octogenarian woman was going to conceive (like Sarah, wife of Abraham or Elizabeth, wife of Zacharias). Isaiah was stating that there would be a very unusual birth and this child would become the Mighty Counselor and the Prince of Peace.

Even though a large number of Jews rejected the Savior, we should not forget that there were many Jews who did accept Jesus. In the early days of Christianity, Jews were the main group of people who converted. Matthew was one of them. Matthew saw Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy. Paul, also, was a Jew. Where did Paul teach? His first stop was always to the synagogue in every town where he preached. These were the people

who knew the prophets. They were the ones who knew the tradition and prophecies of the Messiah. They could see how Jesus fulfilled all of these prophecies. Therefore, there were many Jews who did accept Jesus as the Messiah. We can be very grateful for that.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[How Did Nephi Read Isaiah as a Witness of Christ's Coming?](#) (2 Nephi 17:14)," *KnoWhy* 40 (February 24, 2016).

2 Nephi 18

2 Nephi 18:9—The Lord Will Gather His People from All the Far Countries

Verse 9 says, "Give ear all ye of far countries." This call indicates that the Lord will gather Israel again and bring back his people from wherever they may be in the world. The promise is that even though Israel will be scattered, the Lord will not forget them. This theme runs strongly through all of the Isaiah prophecies. This verse describes Stage 2 of Nephi's worldview of God's victory in gathering Israel.

2 Nephi 19

2 Nephi 19:6 — Isaiah Prophecies of Christ (see also 2 Nephi 17:14, above).

Though Isaiah knew that somebody important was going to be born at a future time, he did not spell it out very clearly. We know that the child would be a king. He would bear many royal titles and would have divine and powerful roles.

How has the Savior fulfilled each of these roles? Christ is a counselor when we pray for help. Christ is wonderful and a prince of peace when we need grace. Think of how Jesus Christ has fulfilled these roles and functions for you in your personal life.

2 Nephi 21–24

2 Nephi 21:1–5 — The Stem and Root of Jesse

Isaiah continued to prophesy about the coming of Christ in 2 Nephi 21:1–5. Among the many biblical prophecies that Moroni spoke to Joseph Smith, words in Isaiah 11 (2 Nephi 21) were declared to be "about to be fulfilled." Isaiah 11 speaks of "the stem of Jesse," "a rod [or branch] that will come out of the stem of Jesse," and a "root of Jesse." D&C 113:1–6 explains that the stem of Jesse refers to Jesus Christ. Who was Jesse? He

was the father of David from the line of Judah. Isaiah was prophesying that the Savior would come through this line. Seeing Christ as the stem of Jesse has had a long and honorable tradition. Many artistic representations show Jesse sleeping with a tree growing from of his body. David is often represented in the tree and Jesus is at the top. A common theme in medieval art was to show the promise given to Jesse—that Christ, the king of Israel, would come through his posterity (See Figure 1).

Isaiah also spoke of a rod or branch, as well as of roots, that would come from the stem. The rod and the roots are described in D&C 113:3–6 as being two different people who would both descend from the tribe of Ephraim (and Joseph) and also from the tribe of Judah. Does Joseph Smith fit the bill as a rod or branch of Jesse? Is he a descendant of Jesse? He might be through a collateral ancestral line. We don't know about that for sure, but we do know that he is of the Tribe of Ephraim.

What should we make of the root? Who is that? I think we are still waiting for further light and knowledge to identify that person. The root prophecy could be looking forward to another time or another person who will eventually bring these two lineages together. I think the prophecy is saying that this branch and this root will bring the House of Judah and the House of Ephraim together. It appears that this prophecy is looking forward to the final millennial stage in Nephi's world-view because chapter 21 introduces the lamb and the lion lying down together with each other.

Even though the entire prophecy of Isaiah may not be clear, the symbolism of the stem is clear—the stem refers to the coming of Christ.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Did Moroni Quote Isaiah 11 to Joseph Smith? \(2 Nephi 21:10\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 50 (March 9, 2016).

2 Nephi 21:9 — Everyone Will Know of the Lord and His Atonement

What is this knowledge that will fill the earth at the end of times? It is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of mankind, and that only through him can we be saved. It shows that the Atonement is for all of us. The whole world will have that knowledge. This describes the final or fourth stage of the Nephite prophetic view.

2 Nephi 21:11 — The Lord Will Gather His People a Second Time

Verse 11 states, "And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people." The important words in this verse are "the second time." There would be a gathering, as Nephi said, when a remnant of Israel would be brought back from the first exile in Babylon. Nephi explains

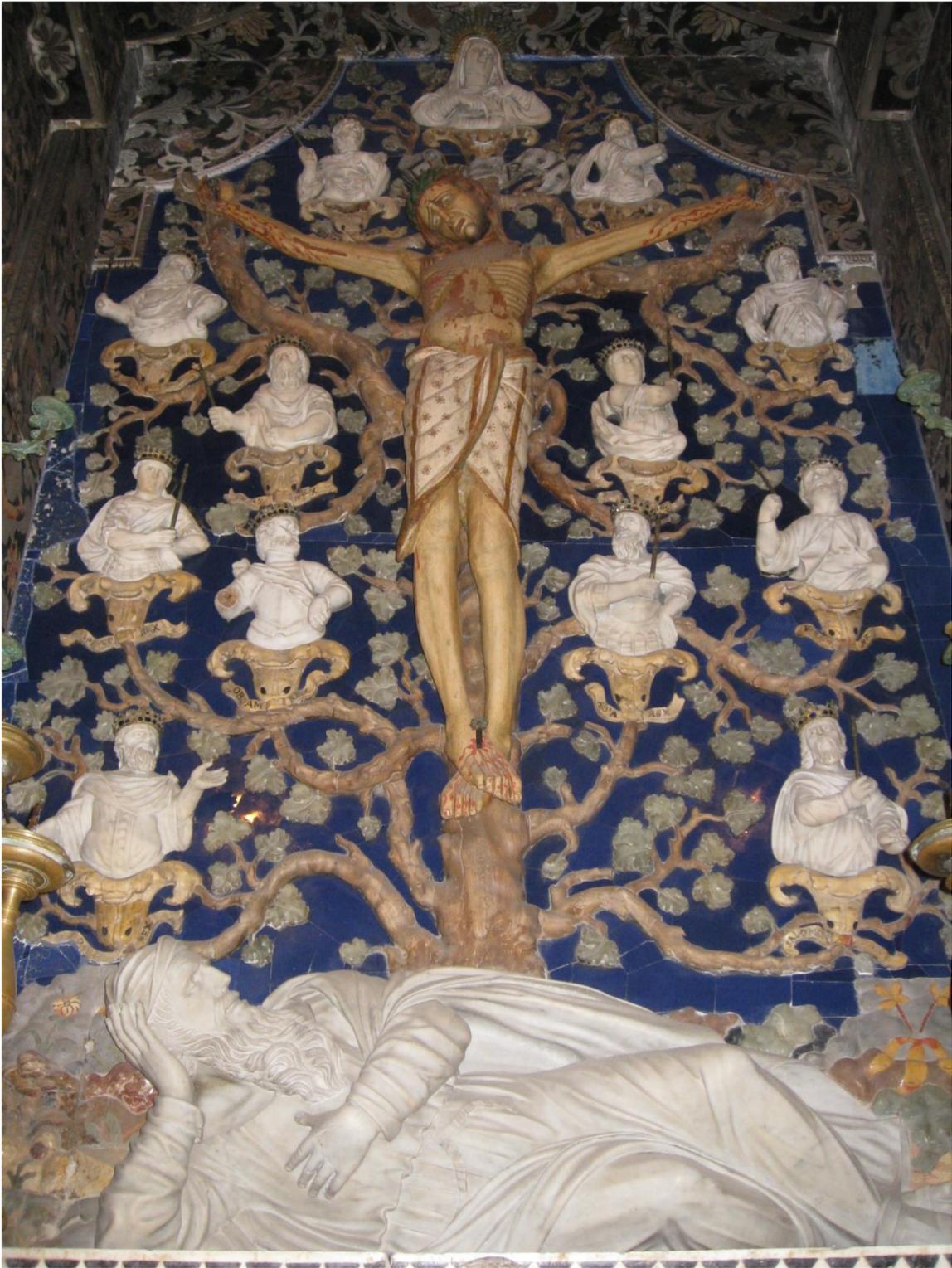


Figure 1 Depiction of the stem of Jesse as the tree of life in the Monreale Cathedral in Sicily. Photo by John W. Welch

in 2 Nephi 25 that they would be brought back so that the Lord could appear to them in Jerusalem.

However, the House of Israel would be scattered again because of the hardness of their hearts and their rejection of Jesus. Here, Isaiah knew that the Lord would have to set his hand a *second time* to gather them “from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.” Nephi speaks of this gathering of Israel both in physical and also in spiritual terms.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Where Did Joseph Smith Get His Ideas about the Physical and Spiritual Gathering of Israel?](#) (2 Nephi 21:11),” *KnoWhy* 290 (March 22, 2017).

For what Isaiah says about the last days, see Nephi’s explanation in 2 Nephi 30 and also Book of Mormon Central, “[What Do Nephi and Isaiah Say about the End Times?](#) (2 Nephi 23:6),” *KnoWhy* 46 (March 3, 2016).

2 Nephi 25

2 Nephi 25:1 — Nephi’s Commentary on Isaiah’s Teachings

After quoting from Isaiah 2–14 (2 Nephi 12–24), Nephi provided five additional chapters of his own interpretation of Isaiah. Rather than being a strict commentary, it is more of a Midrash—an explanation of what he saw in those chapters that he wanted his people, and us, to understand. It was not enough for his people to know *what* Isaiah said on the brass plates; Nephi wanted his people to *understand* what it meant.

That tells us something more about Nephi, doesn’t it? He was a teacher. He was meticulous about what he did. He was very careful. He understood what Isaiah was saying. If you are patient with both Nephi and Isaiah, there is no better guide to take you through Isaiah than Nephi.

The Book of Isaiah is somewhat of a scrapbook of seemingly disconnected revelations, like the Doctrine and Covenants. Each little section is a separate prophecy. Isaiah did not sit down and write all of this in one sitting. We do not know when all the prophecies of Isaiah were put together and collected. The old Jewish tradition is that they were collected in the days of King Hezekiah and finally put into one collection then, but we do not know how decisions were made for selecting the order of the Isaiah writings.

2 Nephi 25:1 — A Brilliant and Insightful Commentary

Nephi claimed that we really would not understand Isaiah unless we had lived in Jerusalem in his day and understood the manner of speech, the usage of the language, the culture, and the places. He said, “For behold, Isaiah spake many things which were hard for many of my people to understand; for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews.” Nephi had lived there, he knew Jerusalem.

These Isaiah chapters are difficult for anyone to understand, but for the Book of Mormon to give us such brilliant and insightful commentary on these very difficult chapters is a most useful element of the book and a great testimony of the Book of Mormon itself.

2 Nephi 25:4 — Nephi Will Prophesy in Plainness

Nephi said that his soul “delighted in plainness.” Do you think Christ likes plainness? What is important about plainness? When Christ said “Judge not that ye be not judged,” it was a very plain saying. Of course, you can judge all you want, but you had better be sure that you are judging righteously, because whatever standard of judgment you use, that will be used to judge you. Be wise about it. That is a plain statement. So is, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Very plain. I think as we look at the words of Jesus, we see that plainness is a great virtue. Sometimes we over-value sophistication and complexity.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Does Nephi Help Us Understand Isaiah? \(2 Nephi 25:4\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 47 (March 4, 2016).

2 Nephi 25:12–13 — Nephi Saw Christ’s Day

After Nephi had quoted the Isaiah passages, he started going through the four main elements in his prophetic world-view. In verse 12, Nephi talked about how Christ would come and how Jesus would manifest himself to the people in Jerusalem but they would reject and crucify him. Nephi included new information here that had not been mentioned before in the Nephite record, specifically he prophesied that after Jesus was laid in a sepulcher for the space of three days, he would rise from the dead. In 1 Nephi 19, Zenos had been quoted as saying there would be three days of darkness, but it did not mention what was going on during those three days of darkness. Here we learn that there would be a three-day period in which Jesus would be in the tomb.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[What Caused the Darkness and Destruction in the 34th Year?](#) (3 Nephi 8:20),” *KnoWhy* 197 (September 28, 2016).

2 Nephi 25:12–17 — Passover and Temple References

There is a corollary between the three days of darkness surrounding the death of Jesus and a prior significant experience in Israelite history. Under the Law of Moses, the Israelites celebrated the Passover as a reminder of God’s hand in saving them from death, redeeming them from slavery, and bringing them safely out of Egypt. Moses had cursed the land of Egypt and prophesied that the firstborn of the Egyptians would die by the hand of the destroying angel. However, the destroying angel would pass over those Israelites who followed his specific instructions to paint their doorposts with the blood of a male lamb without blemish. Three days of darkness and death prevailed in Egypt. This was a foreshadowing of the three nights and days of darkness when Jesus would be crucified, would die, and would lie in the tomb. Significantly, the destruction among the inhabitants of the New World particularly afflicted the wicked, while those who were “more righteous” were “spared” (3 Nephi 9:13).

Moreover, in 2 Nephi 25:16, Nephi quotes Psalm 24:4 in order to worship God “with clean hands and a pure heart.” This was the basic temple entrance requirement in the Temple of Jerusalem and, apparently, also in the Temple of Nephi.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Were Nephite Prophets Familiar with the Passover Tradition? \(Mosiah 13:30\),](#)” *KnoWhy* 420 (March 29, 2018).

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Did Nephi Connect Isaiah’s Prophecies with Joseph Who Was Sold into Egypt? \(2 Nephi 25:17\),](#)” *KnoWhy* 375 (October 24, 2017).

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Did Lehi ‘Suppose’ the Existence of Satan? \(2 Nephi 24:12\),](#)” *KnoWhy* 43 (February 29, 2016).

2 Nephi 25:18 — One True Messiah

Notice that Nephi needed to say that his people should not look for another Messiah to come. There would be no other Messiah, “for there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets, and that Messiah is he who should be rejected of the Jews.” Nephi must have been aware that some people wondered how many Messiahs there would be. What made them wonder?

The word *mashiach* in Hebrew means “anointed” or “anointed one.” In ancient times, a high priest was anointed to be the high priest. So, in a way, every high priest under the Law of Moses was a “mashiach” — a messiah. In 1 Nephi 10:5, Lehi said that *a* messiah would come. He did not say *the* Messiah, so Nephi may have wanted to clarify this matter.

There are reasons why we have multiple anointed people, but that does not make them all *the* Messiah. The name “Mosiah” is actually related to the same word. “Messiah” was a word that was used in more than one way, but Nephi wanted us to know that there is only one Messiah—he who would perform the atonement and would be the one whom we worship through his holy name. As Nephi taught in verse 13: “for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name.”

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Was Mosiah a Type of Christ? \(Mosiah 26:12\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 104 (May 20, 2016).

2 Nephi 25:19 — Six Hundred Years after Lehi Left Jerusalem

Nephi not only made it very clear that there would be only one Messiah, he also revealed the name of the Messiah—“Jesus Christ, the Son of God”—and even gave a timeframe when this one Messiah would be born. Nephi did not pin the date down precisely, but he did say that it would be “six hundred years from the time that [Lehi and his family] left Jerusalem.” In other words, Christ’s birth would be close enough to 600 years that people would have recognized that Jesus was the Messiah, and would have been convinced that there was no need to look for another.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Does Prophecy Shape the Book of Mormon’s Content and Structure? \(Words of Mormon 1:4\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 498 (January 15, 2019).

2 Nephi 25:20 — Symbols of Christ

Again, Nephi referred to the Israelite ancestors of the Nephite people: “And as the Lord God liveth that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, ... there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved.” This is another Passover metaphor.

Nephi continued: “[T]he Lord God . . . gave unto Moses power that he should heal the nations [the tribes of Israel] after they had been bitten by poisonous serpents, if they would cast their eyes unto the serpent which he did raise up before them.” The serpent, especially a serpent raised on a pole, is a symbol of Christ, and it refers to when Moses put the brazen serpent on the pole so that anyone who looked at it would be healed. Jesus used that reference in John 3:14: “[E]ven so must the Son of man be lifted up” just as the healing serpent had been lifted up on the post by Moses.

Nephi also referred back to the time in the wilderness that the Lord “gave [Moses] power that he should smite the rock and the water should come forth.” Once again, this is a type and symbol of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, Paul pointed to this same event in

Israelite history and explained “that Rock was Christ” and the spiritual water would come forth from him. All these things had been revealed to Nephi, and he understood that these images typify Christ. The belief that the Law of Moses and its related events were given to represent what would happen in the life of the Savior is a tradition that goes way, way back in Judeo-Christian thought.

Further Reading

Andrew C. Skinner, “[Serpent Symbols and Salvation in the Ancient Near East and the Book of Mormon](#),” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10, no. 2 (2001): 42–55, 70–71.

2 Nephi 25:19–20, 26 — The Name of Jesus Christ

It seems that Nephi, and many of the ancient prophets, had a well-developed and sophisticated understanding of the mission of Christ, of his life, and also of his name. In the ancient world, the people greatly appreciated the importance of what we call “name theology.” We do not have quite the same appreciation today. They had to know the name of the god that they were worshipping, and the name was usually very holy, kept sacred, and only spoken under certain conditions.

In verse 19, Nephi knew and used the Savior’s full name, Jesus Christ. Often, the Savior was referred to as the Only Begotten of the Father, the Father of Heaven and Earth, and the Son of God. There are a number of ways in which Nephi described the Messiah who was to come (see Figure 2). Possibly, the understanding of the Messiah’s name was something that came gradually and Nephi, Jacob, and all the subsequent Nephite prophets from this point forward knew him by his name, Jesus Christ.

Nephi had deep respect for and interest in the name of God. I am sure he emphasized this. So, when Nephi taught that “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know,” this would have been a very solemn, spiritual, and holy teaching of his time.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Must Christ’s True Church Be Called after His Name?](#) (3 Nephi 27:8),” *KnoWhy* 482 (November 6, 2018).

2 Nephi 25:23 — Persuading Our Children to Be Reconciled to God

Nephi explained his purpose and focus in life: “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God.”

Names Used for Christ by Major Book of Mormon Authors

	Lehi	Nephi,	Jacob	Abinadi	Benjamin	Alma ₂	Amulek	Samuel	Mormon	Moroni
A Messiah	2	1								
A Son of God					1					
All-Powerful Creator			1							
Beloved Son		1								
Christ		40	12	8	12	12	8	2	43	46
Christ Jesus					1					
Christ the Lord				1	1					
Christ the Son						1		1	1	
Creator			3	1	1		1			
Eternal Father		2		2			2		1	5
Eternal God		2	1				2			1
Father		18	3	5	2		1	1	13	22
Father of Heaven and Earth		1		1	1		1	1		
Father and Son				1						
First-Fruits	1									
God	41	135	87	44	57	201	29	9	76	72
God of Abr., Isaac, Jacob		1				2				1
Good Shepherd						7				
Great Creator			3							
Great and Eternal Head								1		
Great Mediator	2									
Great and True Shepherd								1		
Heavenly King				1						
His Son Jesus Christ									1	

Figure 2 Welch, John W., and Greg Welch. *Names Used for Christ by Major Book of Mormon Authors*. Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999, chart 44. Continued on pages 200–201.

	Lehi	Nephi ₁	Jacob	Abinadi	Benjamin	Alma ₂	Amulek	Samuel	Mormon	Moroni
Holy Being										1
Holy Child								1		
Holy Messiah	2									
Holy One	1	1	1		2			1	1	
Holy One of Israel	2	14	17							
Holy One of Jacob		1								
Jehovah										1
Jesus		4	2					9	6	
Jesus Christ		4		3	3	1	1	7	17	
King of Heaven			1		1					
Lamb		29			1	1				1
Lamb of God	1	31			1					2
Lord	64	175	46	49	32	54	29	47	53	54
Lord God	8	38	18		6	8	1	1	1	1
Lord God Almighty	1	1	1							
Lord God of Hosts		2								
Lord God Omnipotent				2						
Lord of Hosts		9	7				3			
Lord Jesus										1
Lord Jesus Christ				1	3		1	3	2	
Lord Omnipotent				4						
Maker			2							
Messiah	13	12	2	1						
Mighty God			1							

	Lehi	Nephi ₁	Jacob	Abinadi	Benjamin	Alma ₂	Amulek	Samuel	Mormon	Moroni
Mighty One of Israel		1								
Mighty One of Jacob		1	1							
Only Begotten of the Father		1				2	1			
Only Begotten Son			2			3				
Prophet	1									
Redeemer	5	12	3			3		1	2	
Savior	1	4	1		1				4	1
Shepherd		2				11		1	1	
Son		8		6		12	1		2	8
Son of the Eternal Father		2								
Son of the Everlasting God		1								
Son of the Most High God		1								
Son of Righteousness		1								
The Christ		1								
The Son of God	2	5		1	2	10	8	3	3	3
The Very Christ		1							1	
The Very God									1	
True Messiah	2	1								
Very God of Israel		1								
TOTALS										
References to Christ	148	565	215	119	126	339	86	74	224	247
Names used unique to author	4	10	4	1	3	3	0	2	3	3
Different names used by author	17	38	22	11	15	20	14	15	20	21
Percent names unique to author	24	26	18	9	20	15	0	13	15	1

What does it mean to “be reconciled” to God? “Reconciled” is not a very complicated word, but what does it mean “to be” reconciled? It could mean to be at peace with God and, when we are at peace with God, we follow his commandments and love Him. More than anything, “to be reconciled” is to follow the first great commandment, to love God. When you are reconciled to him, when you love him, everything else will follow.

2 Nephi 25:23 — After All We Can Do

What does “after all we can do” mean? How many ways can that phrase be understood? In the 1960s and 1970s, the German translation of this verse in the Book of Mormon read, “in spite of all we can do,” we are saved by grace. That translation has since been changed. The translation now says, “after all that we can do.” This verse was probably changed to avoid a common misconception among some churches that our works will not matter—we can do whatever we want—as long as we accept the Savior.

As mentioned in the Notes for the previous Come Follow Me lesson, Jacob also said something similar in 2 Nephi 10:24, “Reconcile yourselves to the will of God, . . . and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved.” Nephi seems to be paraphrasing and simplifying Jacob’s statement to make it plain. But Nephi most likely understood the doctrine of salvation by grace the same way that Jacob expressed it. “After all that we can do” would thus involve all that it takes for us to “reconcile [ourselves] to the will of God” and to be “reconciled unto God,” as Jacob said, and as Nephi hopes to persuade all “to be reconciled to God” (25:23).

After that, it is not only “*by* grace” that we are saved, but also, as Jacob said, “*in and through* the grace of God” that we are saved. “By” seems to express the instrumental effect of God’s grace upon us. “In” would seem to express the interpersonal relationship with God and Christ in which the binding aspects of grace thrive. “Through” grace may inspire a sense of the enduring power of grace that persists through time and throughout all eternity.

Alma 24:11 also correlates well with 2 Nephi 25:23, which is imbedded in the Book of Mormon narrative of the Ammonites, who buried their weapons of war. Regarding their hope of being cleansed from their past wicked, murderous and sinful behavior, they stated:

[I]t has been *all that we could do*, (as we were the most lost of all mankind) to repent of all our sins and the many murders which we have committed, and to get God to take them away from our hearts, for it was *all we could do to repent sufficiently* before God that he would take away our stain.”

In other words, all we can do is turn to Christ and he will be there for us. What was all the Ammonites could do? They buried their weapons, they made a covenant, and they kept it. They refused to fight, even when they were attacked. They offered up their lives rather than fighting. Talk about enduring to the end! This was a deliberate calculation made by the Ammonites. Individually, in their own hearts, they knew and believed that they would be saved and redeemed from all of their problems, but after all they could do. And that turned out to be quite a lot for some of them. So, in our own trials we can look to this scripture as a beacon of hope. We will be free from our sorrows, regrets, burdens and trials after all we can do to turn to God in the midst of that trial.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Does Nephi State that We Are Saved by Grace 'After All We Can Do'?](#) (2 Nephi 25:23)," *KnoWhy* 371 (October 10, 2017).

2 Nephi 25:23–24— Saved by Grace

Even though we have work to do, we are still saved by grace. The interpretive proof of our reliance on grace is found in these two verses: 2 Nephi 25:23–24. Verse 23 ends with the statement that “we are saved [by grace], after all we can do.” This is followed with verse 24, which begins with “notwithstanding [even though we are saved by grace] we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled.” All of us, every one of us, must rely on grace—the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the sustaining influence of Jesus Christ—in order to be made perfect. Then, through our faith we are made alive in Christ because we are willing to do what he has commanded. We still keep the commandments—that is part of all we can do.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks referenced 2 Nephi 25:23 and the principle of grace, when he made the following comment in his April 1998 General Conference address entitled, “Have You Been Saved”:

Some Christians accuse Latter-day Saints ... of denying the grace of God through claiming they can earn their own salvation. We answer this accusation with the words of two Book of Mormon prophets. Nephi taught, “For we labor diligently ... to persuade our children ... to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.”

One of the footnotes in verse 23 points to D&C 138:4, which says, “That through his atonement, and by obedience to the principles of the gospel, mankind might be saved.” This verse undoubtedly implies that we must also be obedient to ordinances as well as

principles, because participating in ordinances are things that we have to do to be exalted. We should also look at being saved in the context of a covenant life.

These verses explain that grace is not simply the means by which we are saved—it is the principle that we live and the salvation that Christ brings. In other words, when we have been saved by grace, we live in grace. This also means that we live *in love* because grace is unconditional love, manifested through the giving of gifts.

The Greek word for “grace” does not describe a tangible gift you may receive. In the ancient world of Jesus and Paul, “grace” established a relationship because when you accept a gift from someone, you are then obliged, and you are then a part of a relationship with the person who gave the gift. I have a friend who is writing a book entitled, “His Obliging Grace.” It is “amazing grace,” but it is also “obliging grace” because we are obliged and welcome to live in that relationship.

Further Reading:

Dallin H. Oaks, “Have You Been Saved,” *Ensign*, April 1998, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.

2 Nephi 25:24–25 — Being Made Alive in Christ through Faith

It is important to understand that because of our faith, we become alive in Christ. Jesus submits his will to the Father and, therefore, if we want to be Christ-like, we must also submit our will to the commandments of God. There is a Christ-like echo in our recognition of this principle.

2 Nephi 25:26 — Rejoicing in Christ

Nephi was well aware that Jesus would come down—the condescension of God—and that he would suffer and die. We take our knowledge of Christ’s ministry on earth for granted because we have hindsight. We know what happened. He lived, he died, and he was resurrected. But Nephi was living before all of this occurred.

Nephi knew that Christ was going to suffer much throughout his life. Nephi understood suffering. He had a difficult life—leaving the comforts of his childhood home in Jerusalem, facing exposure in the wilderness and the risk at sea. Nephi knew that Christ was willing to endure extreme pain and suffering for all mankind because of love. I think Nephi probably took great comfort in the fact that he was being Christ-like as he suffered and endured to the end.

When Christ appeared to the Nephites in 3 Nephi 27:27, he stated, “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.” There is no principle of ethics or morals that is stronger than following the best example that you can find. Christ

showed us, by example, how to best live our life. Following him will make it a reality that we can become Christ-like.

2 Nephi 25:26 — Nephi Writes the Prophecies of Christ for His Posterity

Nephi served in a lot of different positions, as we all do. He was a prophet, he was a builder, he was a record-keeper, he was a king, and he was a leader. Nephi was also a father. We know he had plenty of children. How many prophets in the scriptures tell you what they taught their children? We learn two things about Nephi from this scripture. First, it was important to Nephi to mention his children. Second, teaching his children about Christ was a priority for Nephi. He put his children on the top of his list of things that are most important.

2 Nephi 25:26 — Nephi the Diligent Record-Keeper

Nephi was a record-keeper. He was also a record-maker. This task was very important in Nephi's life. It was extremely difficult to make and keep records on sheets of metal. It involved a lot of time, work, expense, and training. Intense focus was necessary—there were no erasers in that medium.

Nephi had left the Holy Land behind, but had brought the brass plates with him. The plates were, in a way, his connection back to the holiness, the tradition, and the prophets. Nephi was the custodian of all of that! No wonder Nephi felt a strong desire to make sure that these things would come forth at a later time. Nephi labored to teach his children. He also labored to teach them through the records that he kept. The scriptures were obviously very important to Nephi. Talk about the price he had to pay in terms of obedience!

Nephi was also a careful and artistic writer, as is evident in the chiasmic structure he composed in 2 Nephi 25:24–27. Through that inverted parallel arrangement, Nephi focused all attention on Christ at the center of his most famous personal statement of purpose. See Book of Mormon Central, [“What Can We Learn from 10 of the Best Chiasms in the Book of Mormon? Part 1 \(2 Nephi 25:26\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 349 (August 7, 2017); [“Why Is the Book of Mormon So Focused on Jesus Christ? \(2 Nephi 25:26\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 484 (November 13, 2018).

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Is It Important to Keep Records? \(1 Nephi 9:5\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 345 (July 28, 2017).

2 Nephi 25:29–30 — Living the Law of Moses

The Nephites were taught by Nephi that “ye must bow down before him, and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul.” Where did Nephi's

people worship? In the temple! Soon after Nephi and his people settled in the land they eventually called “Nephi,” they built a temple.

Because Nephi’s people were still living the Law of Moses, they needed a temple to obey many parts of that law. He instructed his people: “[I]nasmuch as it shall be expedient, ye must keep the performances and ordinances of God until the law shall be fulfilled which was given unto Moses” (25:30). Among other things, the Law of Moses was the Law of Sacrifice. Nephi’s temple had an altar. The people offered appropriate sacrifices on certain days, as specified under the law. They would have also observed certain festival days such as the Day of Atonement or the Feast of Tabernacles, which were connected particularly with particular sacrifices and solemn observances.

However, Nephi was well aware and knew that all ordinances and covenants under the Law of Moses pointed to the coming of Christ. Nephi preached of Christ and also the importance of fulfilling the requirements under the Law of Moses. The word “expedient” in verse 30 probably means “appropriate” or “necessary.” Nephi was explaining to his people that it was still necessary for his people to perform the ordinances under the law of Moses because that law had not been fulfilled. He also understood that, with the coming of Christ, the performances and ordinances under the Law of Moses would be fulfilled.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Did Ancient Israelites Build Temples Outside of Jerusalem?](#) (2 Nephi 5:16),” *KnoWhy* 31 (February 11, 2016).

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Does the Book of Mormon Say We Must Worship God with Our Whole Soul?](#) (2 Nephi 25:29),” *KnoWhy* 467 (September 13, 2018).