

March 11-17, 2024

2 Nephi 26–30

“A MARVELOUS WORK AND A WONDER”

Summary: *2 Nephi 26. Christ will minister to the Nephites—Nephi foresees the destruction of his people—They will speak from the dust—The Gentiles will build up false churches and secret combinations—The Lord forbids men to practice priestcrafts. About 559–545 B.C.*

2 Nephi 27. Darkness and apostasy will cover the earth in the last days—The Book of Mormon will come forth—Three witnesses will testify of the book—The learned man will say he cannot read the sealed book—The Lord will do a marvelous work and a wonder—Compare Isaiah 29. About 559–545 B.C.

2 Nephi 28. Many false churches will be built up in the last days—They will teach false, vain, and foolish doctrines—Apostasy will abound because of false teachers—The devil will rage in the hearts of men—He will teach all manner of false doctrines. About 559–545 B.C.

2 Nephi 29. Many Gentiles will reject the Book of Mormon—They will say, We need no more Bible—The Lord speaks to many nations—He will judge the world out of the books which will be written. About 559–545 B.C.

2 Nephi 30. Converted Gentiles will be numbered with the covenant people—Many Lamanites and Jews will believe the word and become delightsome—Israel will be restored and the wicked destroyed. About 559–545 B.C.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What are the Jewish “different rules” for “different peoples?”

The Word of the Lord is for ALL people. Although the Jews think there are fewer laws for the Gentiles, the Book of Mormon teaches that the Gentiles will learn the Law, they then will depart from it. It will be restored, first to the Gentiles and then to the Jews. “(There are) Seven laws which were supposed by the rabbis to have been binding on all mankind even before the revelation at Sinai. They are referred to as ‘Noachide’ because of their universality, since the whole human race was supposed to be descended from the three sons of Noah, who alone survived the flood. Exegetically derived from statements made by God to Adam and to Noah, six of them are negative: **Not To: 1)** worship idols; **2)** blaspheme the name of God; **3)** kill; **4)** commit adultery; **5)** rob; **6)**

eat flesh that had been cut from a living animal; **Must Do: 7)** establish courts of justice. These seven laws are binding on all non-Jews even today. Whoever observes them is considered to be among the ‘Righteous Gentiles’.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

A Messiah for some and another Liberator for others?

Likewise, the Jews consider the Messiah as coming to redeem them. The Book of Mormon teaches that the Messiah is for ALL people. “The Hebrew word for Messiah, *mashi’ah*, means ‘anointed’ and indicates that the Messiah has been chosen by God. The coming of the Messiah therefore has come to mean the redemption of the Jewish people and an end to its suffering and tribulations.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The Book of Mormon teaches this clearly, “And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus is the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced

also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God;" (2 Nephi 26:12) On the other hand, "In Judaic thought, when the Messianic period arrives, the divine aspect of the Messiah is discounted, probably because the concept of God and the Godhead has deteriorated throughout time in Judaism. "In traditional Judaism, the Messiah will be a human being --- albeit it a perfect one -- who will come and bring harmony to the world. He will not have a divine aspect other than having been chosen by God for his task." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Who is usually referred to as the "People of the Book?"

Reading the term "Bible," as referred to in the Book of Mormon, can be understood as a record of "The Jews" including the era of Jesus and his disciples. In the Prophet Ezekiel's vision of the "dry bones" (Ezekiel 37), the term for the Bible is the "stick" (same Hebrew root word as bones) of Judah and it is compared to the Book of Mormon, the "stick" of Joseph. Judaic description of the Bible refers just to the period of time preceding Jesus of Nazareth. The Jews are very much involved in writing and in books. It is clear to see that both "Judah" and "Joseph" are culturally and scripturally the "People of the Book." "In the *Talmud* (Jewish written biblical interpretations) the Bible is known as *Mikra*, which is a noun formed from the verb *kara* meaning 'to read.' The commonly used Hebrew name for the Bible, however, is *Tanakh*. This word is formed from the initial letters of the Hebrew names of the three parts of the Bible: *Torah* (the first five Books), *Nevi'im* (The Prophets) and *Ketuvim* (The Writings, or Hagiographa). The English name, 'Bible,' is from the Greek meaning 'book,' and the other accepted English name, 'Scriptures' (or Holy Scriptures), is from the Latin and means 'writings.'"

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) Another explanation includes: "Books and learning

are so much a part of Jewish tradition, that Jews are called 'the people of the Book.' Indeed, many of the violent acts of antisemitism throughout history were accompanied by the defacement and burning of books. The persecutors, knowing how much anguish this would cause, identified the book with the Jew. Today, all over the world, with books and paperback editions readily accessible, Jewish book collectors are common. Israel ranks second in the world in the number of books of all kinds bought per person." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

When do some think "writing," began?

"The land between the rivers' [Tigris and Euphrates], Mesopotamia, is the ancient name for the region today covered by Iraq, Iran and parts of Syria and Turkey. Western civilization (the establishment of written language, codified law, cities and trade) began in this region toward the end of the fourth millennium (i.e., four thousand years) B.C.E. when the Sumerians emerged as the dominant element in an intermingling of several migrant peoples. Sumer became the name of the land at the head of the Persian Gulf and Sumerian its language. To the Sumerians we owe the full development of writing, possibly the invention of bronze metallurgy . . ." "Writing had a profound effect on Judaism. The covenant between God and the Chosen People was transformed into a written text; the central religious object became the Ten Commandments, inscribed on stone; and later the Torah scroll was to be revered. The biblical society as a whole became 'book centered.' In contrast to many other societies, the Israelites did not limit the acquisition of the arts of reading and writing to the nobility --- any tribesman, even a non-priest, could become a literate leader. Certainly, by King Hezekiah's time (eighth century B.C.E.), a great deal of literary activity was taking place." "Writing

usually required a professional to execute it. In ancient times a royal court officer, the *sofer* (scribe), was undoubtedly the letter-writer as well. The professional letter-writer was an important post even into the 20th century. Seals which were used to sign and close the documents of antiquity as well as letters, are displayed in the Israel Museum, and in other collections.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints know that writing and record-keeping originated with our first earthly parents. “And a book of remembrance was kept, in the which was recorded, in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration.” (**Moses 6:5**)

What did Isaiah include in his meaning of a “sealed book?”

The term seal and sealed book has a Jewish connection that Nephi was familiar with. “Seals employed from the beginning of historical time as the most common means of identifying property, appear both functionally and incidentally in various biblical stories, and many seals from biblical times have actually been uncovered by archaeologists. References in Kings, Isaiah and Job point to the common use of seals for letters and documents, while the function of the seal as the symbol of royal power is very clearly demonstrated in the Book of Esther, with King Ahasuerus giving Haman and Mordecai in turn his own personal signet ring to use in their correspondence with the settlements of his dominion. Archaeological excavations in *Erez* (land of) Israel have yielded many vessels from the eighth to the sixth centuries B.C.E. which are imprinted with their owners' seals. Of particular interest

are jars bearing the stamp ‘of the King’ which presumably were used in the collection of royal taxes.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How was the Book of Isaiah – also a sealed book, later to become unsealed?

“It is no secret that for any practical purpose the Book of Isaiah has been a sealed book to most readers probably since the time of the prophet himself. Of course, its author—Isaiah—was not just aware of that but he purposely intended it to be so at the time he wrote it. It served a divine purpose of keeping his book unaltered, while those with eyes to see and ears to hear would comprehend much of it and thus increase their understanding. In fact, an ancient writing attributed to Isaiah affirms that the book which he “openly proclaimed”—that is, the Book of Isaiah—was written “in parables” or as an allegory so that not everyone would understand it (**Ascension of Isaiah 4:20**).” (**Isaiah Explained, Avraham Gileadi, Chapter 1**) God commanded Isaiah to write an end-times book. “And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.” (**Isaiah 29:18**).

What did God give – and take away?

“When Sabbath meetings, fast days, and temple ordinances become mere routine (**Isaiah 1:10–15; 58:1–3**), when people’s piety toward God “consists of commandments of men learned by rote” while their hearts remain far from him (**Isaiah 29:13**), when his people’s prophets and seers have fallen into a deep sleep (**Isaiah 29:10**), God intervenes for good and for evil. For good, when he “lay[s] in Zion a stone, a keystone, a precious

cornerstone, a sure foundation” (**Isaiah 28:16**). For good, when he brings forth “the words of the book” (**Isaiah 29:18**). For evil, when he brings “a flooding scourge” upon those who mock at how he intervenes (**Isaiah 28:14–22**).” (*Isaiah Explained, Avraham Gileadi, Chapter 1*)

How can I recognize the difference between religious and spiritual?

Many people throughout history have lived religious lives that were not necessarily spiritual. They may have confused one for the other. When spirituality becomes hypocritical, God identifies the true from the false: “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.” (**Isaiah 29:13–14**). God patiently restores his truths to them through scriptures, the Book of Isaiah, applicable in ancient times as well as now, and the Book of Mormon (with lots of Isaiah quotes) in present times. “And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.” (**Isaiah 29:18; 30:8–9**)

How does reading in context help me interpret better?

“Built into Isaiah’s prophecy—and indeed

into all scripture—are two different ways one may interpret them. The first is superficial, presumptive, and conceited. The second is in-depth, inquiring, and unassuming. That is one way God divides people—“Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.” (**Isaiah 29:14**)—when the truth finally comes out. Besides inheriting a Christian tradition that bears little resemblance to the religion of Jesus, the modern world has inherited an entire array of scriptural interpretations that don’t reflect what their texts actually say. Particularly is that the case with the writings of Isaiah.” (*Isaiah Explained, Avraham Gileadi, Chapter 1*)

How valuable is the Book of Mormon for all of us?

The Book of Mormon is the tool of the convincing of the Jews and the Gentiles that Jesus is the Messiah. It corrects the mistaken perceptions of Jesus as God the Father AND the Son AND the Holy Ghost. It came forth through the prophet Joseph Smith, a latter-day descendant of ancient Joseph who saved his brothers. It is revealed to all mankind in preparation of the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, and a descendant of ancient David. Even some Jews infer a similar sequence: “According to the *Talmud*, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)