

## Rel A 304 Reading Questions for Thursday, December 7

2 Nephi 28–30

Spencer, *Vision of All*, 279–85.

Spencer, *Vision of All*, 294–97.

“Dealing with Death: Sunday Will Come” [video], The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://youtu.be/cV3hQtiPGnw>.

Today we conclude our tour of Nephi’s writings. Our goal today to bring together everything Nephi has said about Isaiah and see if we can get a big-picture sense for how Nephi uses Isaiah and what message Nephi sees in his writings.

### 2 Nephi 28–30

In these final three chapters, Nephi continues to describe the last days using information he obtained in his big vision, and he also continues to sprinkle in passages from all over the book of Isaiah, although not with the same systematic rigor as when he was likening Isaiah 29. Look how often Isaiah continues to pop up:

Isaiah phrases	Isaiah reference	Ref in 2 Nephi 28–30
“One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and ... shall”	Isaiah 44:5	2 Nephi 28:3
“eat ... drink; for to morrow we ... die”	Isaiah 22:13	2 Nephi 28:7–8
“seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works ... in the dark”	Isaiah 29:15	2 Nephi 28:9
“lifted up”	Isaiah 2:12–14	2 Nephi 28:12
“All ... gone astray”	Isaiah 53:6	2 Nephi 28:14
“taught by the precept of men”	Isaiah 29:13	2 Nephi 28:14
“turn aside the just for a thing of nought”	Isaiah 29:21	2 Nephi 28:16
“the precept of men”	Isaiah 29:13	2 Nephi 28:26
“line upon line, ... precept upon precept, ... here a little, and there a little”	Isaiah 28:10, 13	2 Nephi 28:30 (quoting God)
“the precept of men”	Isaiah 29:13	2 Nephi 28:31 (quoting God)
“I ... proceed to do a marvellous work among”	Isaiah 29:14	2 Nephi 29:1 (quoting God)
“set ... hand again the second time to recover ... people”	Isaiah 11:11	2 Nephi 29:1 (quoting God)
“hiss unto ... the end of the earth”	Isaiah 5:26	2 Nephi 29:2–3 (quoting God)
“standard to ... people”	Isaiah 49:22	2 Nephi 29:2 (quoting God)

“the islands of the sea”	Isaiah 11:11	2 Nephi 29:11 (quoting God)
<i>Six entire verses, from “With righteousness shall ... he judge the poor” to “as the waters cover the sea.”</i>	Isaiah 11:4–9	2 Nephi 30:9, 11–15

But, Nephi’s not *just* weaving tons of Isaiah into his prophecy—Nephi also starts drawing heavily on the words of his brother Jacob, whose sermon is quoted earlier in 2 Nephi 6–10:

Jacob phrases	Jacob reference	Ref 2 Nephi 28–30
“the wise, and the learned, and ... rich, ... are puffed up”	2 Nephi 9:42	2 Nephi 28:15
“Wo unto ... for he/they shall be thrust down to hell”	2 Nephi 9:34, 36	2 Nephi 28:15
“of no worth”	2 Nephi 9:51	2 Nephi 28:16
People are “grasp[ed]” by death, hell, and the devil	2 Nephi 6:10	2 Nephi 28:19, 22–23
“death and hell, and the devil”	2 Nephi 9:26	2 Nephi 28:23
“death and hell”	2 Nephi 9:10, 12, 19	2 Nephi 28:23
“be judged ... their works”	2 Nephi 9:44	2 Nephi 28:23
“lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment”	2 Nephi 9:19, 26 (cf. v. 66)	2 Nephi 28:23
“Wo”	10× in 2 Nephi 9:27–38	7× in 2 Nephi 28:24–32 (cf. vv. 15–16)

Just before beginning the big block of Isaiah chapters, Nephi had told us, “And now **I, Nephi**, write more of the words of **Isaiah**, for my soul delighteth in his words ... for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. And my brother, **Jacob**, also has seen him as I have seen him; wherefore, **I** will send **their** words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. Wherefore, by the words of **three**, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words” (2 Nephi 11:2–3). Here in 2 Nephi 28 we see these three come together as Nephi weaves his words, Isaiah’s words, and Jacob’s words into one unified prophetic witness.

1. Nephi has apparently not been very impressed with what he knows of our modern, post-Enlightenment, secular society, which he characterizes—sarcastically?—as “learned.”
  - a. He quoted Jacob’s dismissal of “learned” people who “think they are wise” (2 Nephi 9:28), and his warning that “the learned” would be rejected if they did not “cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God” (2 Nephi 9:42).
  - b. In his likening of Isaiah 29, Nephi predicted that “the learned” would reject the Book of Mormon because they cannot prove it by examining the gold plates, and that “because of the glory of the world and to get gain will they say this” (2 Nephi

27:16). God told Nephi that He was going to deliberately bring the Book of Mormon forth through someone who is “not learned” in order to show the world that “I am a God of miracles . . . and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith” (2 Nephi 27:23).

- c. Later, when quoting Isaiah 29:13–16 and likening it to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, Nephi amended Isaiah’s line “for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish” to “for the wisdom of their wise *and learned* shall perish” (2 Nephi 27:26).
- d. In his prophecy of the devil’s influence in the latter days, Nephi blasted “the learned” as among those who “shall be thrust down to hell” (2 Nephi 28:15).

You are a BYU student getting an advanced education at an institution that in many ways embraces modern standards of rationality and academic rigor. We value the scientific method and all that it can tell us about how the world works. We are trained to use critical thinking to problem solve. We honor people of great intelligence and ingenuity. So what do you make of Nephi’s critique of our modern world? How do you think we can “Enter to learn, go forth to serve” in a way that avoids cutting ourselves off from “that happiness which is prepared for the saints” (2 Nephi 9:43)? Jacob had said that being “learned” is “good *if* they hearken unto the counsels of God” (2 Nephi 9:29). What does that good hearkening-learnedness combination look like to you?

- 2. Many Gentiles will resist the appearance of the Book of Mormon because “we have [already] got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.” What two main arguments does the Lord make against that claim? (See 2 Nephi 29:4–5 and 29:6–11.)

At the end of 2 Nephi 29, Nephi assures latter-day remnants of Israel that God will protect them from wicked Gentiles that “fight . . . against my people.” As 2 Nephi 30 opens, Nephi speaks to his “beloved brethren” of the house of Israel and wants to clarify something important about that covenant protection, telling them not to assume “that ye are more righteous than the Gentiles shall be.” He then warns them: “Except ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall all likewise perish.” Any Gentiles who repent will be numbered among “the covenant people of the Lord,” while members of the covenant people who “will not repent shall be cast off.”

Nephi is emphatic on this point because he wants to make sure that his readers do not make the mistake of assuming that “covenant people” are somehow better than other people or that they receive automatic blessings independent of their keeping the covenant. President Russell M. Nelson reiterated this doctrine in modern times: “Some of us are the literal seed of Abraham; others are gathered into his family by adoption. The Lord makes no distinction. Together we receive these promised blessings—if we seek the Lord and obey His commandments. But if we

don't, we lose the blessings of the covenant"

(<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2011/10/covenants>).

3. Nephi teaches that "as many of the Gentiles as will repent" will become what? On the other hand, what will happen to people of the covenant who "will not repent"?
4. As you read 2 Nephi 30:3, notice that Nephi is still being consistent in distinguishing between "the book" (the gold plates) and "the words [of the book]" (the translation of the Book of Mormon). Nephi prophesies that the Gentiles will carry "them" (the words of the translation) to which specific Israelite remnant? What "shall be declared among" this particular remnant?
5. Nephi ends this section of prophecy by quoting from Isaiah 11, which we already saw back in 2 Nephi 21. These words easily fit a millennial era, a messianic age when violence and wickedness will end as the Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled in its fulness. As you read through 2 Nephi 30:9–18, what is your favorite description of this time?

### **Spencer, *Vision of All*, 279–85.**

In the pages leading up to where you start reading on p. 279, Dr. Spencer had established that in 2 Nephi 28–30, Nephi draws especially from three different passages:

- 1) "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" (Isaiah 11:11).
- 2) "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:14).
- 3) "Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people" (Isaiah 49:22).

### *Concatenating Isaiah 11, 29, and 49*

Dr. Spencer points out that the opening verses of 2 Nephi 29 contain a lengthy aside that interrupts the main thought about Gentile unbelief. Here is the main thought: "But behold, there shall be many ... of the Gentiles [which shall] say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible" (2 Nephi 29:1, 3). Now here is the aside, with the key Isaiah quotes listed above marked with corresponding colors:

<sup>1</sup> ... at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them, that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may set my hand again the second time to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel; <sup>2</sup>and also, that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed; and that the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel; <sup>3</sup>and because my words shall hiss forth ...

6. In 2 Nephi 29, Nephi quotes God referring to “a marvelous work” in the last days. That’s language we’re quick to connect with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and with good reason. It’s pretty clear that this is exactly what Nephi has in mind. And that “marvelous work” has a specific purpose here: it’s to launch what?
7. Nephi and Jacob draw on the language of Isaiah 11:11 with some frequency: “the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover ... his people.” These passages seem to make clear that Nephi and his brother saw in Isaiah’s talk of “the second time” a hint that he’s thinking of two *distinct* events of gathering the remnant, one taking place when and the other taking place when?
8. In Isaiah 49:22, the Lord says, “Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people.” In its original, Isaianic setting, the verse describes God’s setting up of a standard for the Gentiles, waving a banner of sorts before them. That banner is the redemption of Israel from captivity in Babylon. The Gentiles see that redemption, they’re convinced that Israel’s God is the true God, and so they seek to assist Israel in their redemption so that they can become a part of the covenant Israel’s received. When Nephi likens this passage in 2 Nephi 29, what does the banner represent? To whom does the banner wave?
9. In 2 Nephi 29, Nephi brings together his favorite passages from Isaiah, weaving them into a single, forceful picture. Isaiah 11:10 speaks of redeeming Israel a “second time”—the last days. Isaiah 29 speaks of a “marvellous work” involving the “words of a book that is sealed”—in its latter-day fulfillment, the Book of Mormon. Finally, Isaiah 49 describes the redemption of Israel as “standard” or banner that attracts Gentiles to the covenant. Nephi wants us to see in *all* of Isaiah’s writings just *one* theme, really. For Nephi, what is the single message in Isaiah?

**Spencer, *Vision of All*, 294–97.**

*Isaiah's Big Picture*

10. Nephi delights in Isaiah, who gives the rich patterns followed in every iteration of covenantal history. And Nephi delights in plainness, his own revelatory visions that have helped him to see how his brothers' people would live out the patterns Isaiah describes. \_\_\_\_\_, plus \_\_\_\_\_—that's Nephi's whole program in a word.

**“Dealing with Death: Sunday Will Come” [video], The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://youtu.be/cV3hQtiPGnw>.**

Nephi uses Isaiah to promise latter-day Israel that no matter how bad things seem, God has not forgotten us and will deliver us. This video shares one woman's story of clinging to hope for a better future even during her darkest hours.