

Rel A 304 Reading Questions for Thursday, November 2

Joshua M. Sears, “Deutero-Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Latter-day Saint Approaches,” in *They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Charles Swift and Nicholas J. Frederick, The Book of Mormon Academy (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2022), 365–91.
“Alone, but Not Lonely” [video], The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://youtu.be/iTDz7PmZpbs>.

Now that we’ve finished reading more slowly through the final chapters of Isaiah, we’re going to take a closer look at a historical question raised by the presence of some of the Isaiah chapters in the Book of Mormon.

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1. Most Jewish and Christian Bible readers are comfortable with the conclusion reached by Bible scholars that the book of Isaiah was written by multiple prophets over a period of time. But why does that conclusion create potential problems for the Book of Mormon?

Academic Assessments of Isaiah

2. In 1892, biblical scholar Bernhard Duhm divided up the book of Isaiah into three major sections, called First Isaiah (or Proto-Isaiah), Second Isaiah (or Deutero-Isaiah), and Third Isaiah (or Trito-Isaiah). What are the chapter ranges that correspond to each of his three sections?

Approach #1: Use the Book of Mormon to Dismiss the Scholarly Dating of Isaiah

Approach #2: Argue for the Unity of Isaiah Using Biblical Evidences

3. When Latter-day Saint scholars have critiqued the academic arguments for multiple authors in the book of Isaiah, all of them take exception to what common academic assumption?

4. Biblical scholars have pointed to differences in vocabulary, themes, and literary style that characterize Isaiah 40–66 in comparison to Isaiah 1–39. Latter-day Saints arguing for the unity of Isaiah make what counterargument about those differences?

Approach #3: Work with Isaiah Scholarship and Find Nuanced Ways to Account for the Brass Plates

5. Hugh Nibley was the first Latter-day Saint scholar to argue that you can believe the Book of Mormon is an ancient text *and* accept that multiple authors wrote the book of Isaiah over a period of time. What was his primary inspiration for this understanding of Isaiah's development, and why did that suggest to him that Isaiah could be a composite text?
6. John Welch, William Hamblin, and other Latter-day Saint scholars have explored how you might map Nibley's model of Isaiah's development onto a timeline. If you assume that *at least* the Isaiah chapters quoted in the Book of Mormon have to have existed by the time Nephi took the brass plates, then it's possible that some chapters were written and/or edited by other prophets *in between* Isaiah and the brass plates. About how many years of a gap is there between Isaiah's death and when Nephi took the plates?

Approach #4: Explore How Divine Intervention Might Have Affected the Text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon

7. Book of Mormon scholars have persuasively argued that the English Book of Mormon is a "cultural translation" that sometimes communicates meaning to modern readers via a nonliteral rendering of what was on the plates, including a dedication to the language and phrasing of the King James Bible. This opens up the possibility that what might have happened to the Isaiah chapters during the translation process?
8. Several recent Latter-day Saint scholars have argued that the whole question of Deutero-Isaiah in the Book of Mormon changes dramatically when we consider even the possibility that God at some point circumnavigated the expected historical limitations on what texts of Isaiah should have been available in specific times and places. Book of

Mormon scholar Grant Hardy observes that *theology* can always accommodate *scholarship* if one accepts the possibility of what?

Synthesis and Evaluation

9. The Book of Mormon was never intended to stand or fall solely on historical evidence, which God told Nephi he planned to deliberately withhold from our secular, skeptical, latter-day world (see 2 Nephi 27:20–23). “I am a God of miracles,” the Lord declared, “and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their _____.”

10. Was there anything confusing in this article that you want to discuss more in class? Do you have any follow-up questions about this topic?

“Alone, but Not Lonely” [video], The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,
<https://youtu.be/iTDz7PmZpbs>.

Today we’ve been talking about historical questions for which we do not have all the answers (or at least we aren’t sure which of our answers is correct). Not having definitive answers can sometimes be troubling for people, but part of our journey through Heavenly Father’s plan is coming to accept that right now we do not know everything. Life is complicated and many challenges we face are ambiguous. We are assured that God will help us make it back to Him, but we cannot yet see the details of our future. In this video, Dr. Erica Glenn shares how we can—and why we must—hope in Christ even when our path is unexpected or unclear.