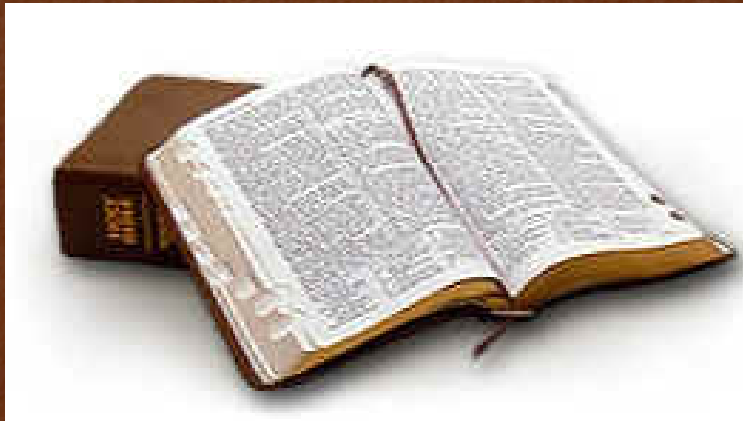

Introduction to 301: *Old Testament Genesis-2 Samuel*



Dr. Easton-Flake

- Associate Professor Ancient Scripture (@ BYU since 2013)
- Born & Raised in Sandy, Utah
- Attended Brigham Young University
- PhD in American Literature from Brandeis
- MA in Women's Studies from Brandeis
- Research Focus:
 - 19th C. Women's Reform Literature,
 - 19th C. Women's Biblical Hermeneutics,
 - 19th C. Women's Theology and Poetry
 - Book of Mormon : Narratology & 19th Century
- Lived in Boston-Area for 8 years
- Married with Two Daughters & Two Sons



Appropriate Mask Wearing Required



- “We want to do all we can to limit the spread of these viruses. We know that protection from the diseases they cause can only be achieved by immunizing a very high percentage of the population.
- “To limit exposure to these viruses, we urge the use of face masks in public meetings whenever social distancing is not possible. To provide personal protection from such severe infections, we urge individuals to be vaccinated. Available vaccines have proven to be both safe and effective.”
- The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Rush Write

- Why do you think Religion classes are an integral part of a BYU education?

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- Why do you think Religion classes are an integral part of a BYU education?
- How do you think an Old Testament class in college should differ from your seminary and gospel doctrine classes in church? OR
- What are the benefits to you of having a religion class as a university course?

Aims of a BYU Education

- (1) spiritually strengthening,
- (2) intellectually enlarging,
- (3) character building,
- (4) leading to lifelong learning and service.

How will this class contribute to the Aims of a BYU Education?



Course Description

- Rel A 301 is an introductory survey to the first half of the Hebrew Bible or *Tanakh*, commonly known as the “Old Testament”
- In addition to reading most of Genesis thru 2 Samuel and a sampling of the psalms, this course will introduce students to the basic historical context and the literary and theological issues that surround this important work of scripture.

Course Objectives

- First, to increase the student's knowledge of the first half of the Old Testament—that is, to familiarize him or her more fully with its basic storylines, characters, themes and theological concepts.
- Second, to help the student read, analyze, discuss, and write about the Bible as both a source of scriptural knowledge and as a sacred *text*, examining them in their historical, literary, and theological contexts.
- Third, to strengthen individual testimonies of sacred truths, particularly by an increased understanding God and his interactions with his people throughout history.

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BYU Religious Education Statement on Diversity and Inclusion: The Lord invites “all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female . . . and all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33, emphasis added). Expressions of bigotry and discrimination—whether intended or not—on any basis, including but not limited to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability assume superiority and are contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ. We affirm our commitment to stand against all such expressions, and we affirm our commitment, in all of our endeavors, to follow the example of the Savior in being loving and inclusive, especially to the marginalized. When students, staff, and faculty extend common courtesy, empathy, and understanding, we manifest our love for Christ and for all God’s children.

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Listening to, Learning from, & Caring about Marginalized Voices.

What is God teaching you through the Old Testament about how to interact with Him and everyone you come into contact with?

In his October 2019 general conference address, President Russell M. Nelson spoke about poverty and other humanitarian concerns, declaring, “As members of the Church, we feel a kinship to those who suffer in any way... We heed an Old Testament admonition: ‘Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy’ [Deuteronomy 15:11].” President Nelson’s linking of Old Testament law with modern social concerns highlights the continued relevancy of the Old Testament for confronting modern challenges, including poverty, ethnocentrism, and the world’s growing refugee crisis.

Luke 4:18-19 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Mosiah 4: For behold, are we not all beggars? . . . 26 And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.

COMPONENTS OF STUDENT GRADES

- Attendance & Participation: 6%+
- Completion of Assigned Reading before Coming to Class: Daily reading from the Old Testament & outside source material: 27%
- Lived Religion Assignment: 7.5%
- Midterm 1: 17%
- Midterm 2: 17%
- Final: 22%
- Reflection Paper: 3%
- Course Evaluation 1%

1/3 of Your Grade is Completely Based on Whether You
Act or Not

Attendance & Participation (6%+)

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. I know everyone has problems from time to time in getting to class, but since our class is highly discussion oriented and much of what you will learn will come from classroom discussion and lectures, absences will affect your final grade for the course. You are allowed **two** free absences for any reason; each subsequent absence will result in a 2% reduction of your final grade. *Tardiness:* Class begins promptly on the hour. Three late arrivals to class will equal one absence and arriving more than 15 minutes late is considered an absence. *If you have covid, the flu, or another illness that makes it impossible for you to attend class, you may attend class via Zoom. You must let me know by 9am the morning of class for this to be an option that does not count towards your absence count. You must also email me after class letting me know that you watched via Zoom. After eight absences, you will automatically fail the class.*

Participation: Think of this class as a community of scripture scholars coming together to explore ideas discovered during their personal study of the Old Testament. To facilitate this environment, you must come to class prepared to participate fully in class discussions and activities. Please come with the assigned texts read and marked up for the day they appear on the syllabus and come to class prepared to offer your own thoughts and/or questions on them. There are benefits in a religion course that can only be experienced when a person is *fully* present in the class. Because of this, your class participation will be an important part of your final grade. **You will self-grade your participation two times during the semester. Students earning an “A” grade in class participation would have done the assigned reading before class, actively participated, been eager to learn, brought scriptures to class, are not on any devices etc. Students who merely attend class and stay awake should give themselves a C.** *Note: to receive 10/10 in participation, you must verbally respond to a question at least once a week. I also reserve the right to modify your participation grade based on your verbal participation or electronic usage.*

Inappropriate Use of Course Materials: All course materials (e.g., outlines, handouts, syllabi, exams, PowerPoint presentations, lectures, lecture audio, video recordings, etc.) are proprietary. **Students are prohibited from recording, posting, sharing, or selling any such course materials without the express written permission of the professor teaching this course. To do so is a violation of the Brigham Young University Honor Cod.**

Use of Electronic Devices in Class: Please be courteous of both the instructor and other students in class. This includes care in your use of laptops, iPads, cell phones, and other devices. Laptops and other internet-connected devices should only be used during class for taking notes, accessing electronic versions of the scriptures, and downloading course material. Emailing and texting and all gaming and web surfing should not be done in class. Failure to use electronic devices appropriately will result in a dramatic deduction in one's participation grade.

This Course at BYU: According to the university document "The Aims of a BYU Education," your experience on campus and in this classroom should be spiritually strengthening, intellectually enlarging, character building, and lead to lifelong learning and service. Additionally, I am committed to creating and maintaining a classroom environment that will foster respect and excitement about learning while being conducive to the expression of gospel principles. Students, too, have a responsibility in maintaining a positive classroom experience. Since so much of our time will be involved in class discussion, it is imperative that students be courteous and helpful to each other. They are also expected to practice academic honesty and all BYU standards

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Pre-Class Reading of the Assigned Material: Old Testament & Contextual Sources (27%)

Before coming to class, read the chapters as outlined in the class schedule. You only get credit for reading you do *this* term. Listening to audio versions of the scriptures does not count. I want you to rediscover the Old Testament even if you have read it before. Reading it means you will take the time and thought necessary to have a good experience with it, that you will try to understand what it says and let it make a difference in your life. **There will also be approximately five pages of required outside source material to read before class.** It will be available on Learning Suite. Assign how many points you honestly deserve based on the percentage of the reading assignment you finish before class. For instance, ten points if you read and engaged with the material, nine points if you read it at a rapid pace, and five points if you read just over half of the material. Half credit may be given for reading assignments completed after class but within one week of the initial due date. Half credit may also be given if you forget to record your learning score on Learning Suite. Please contact my TA. (1% of your grade for each class)

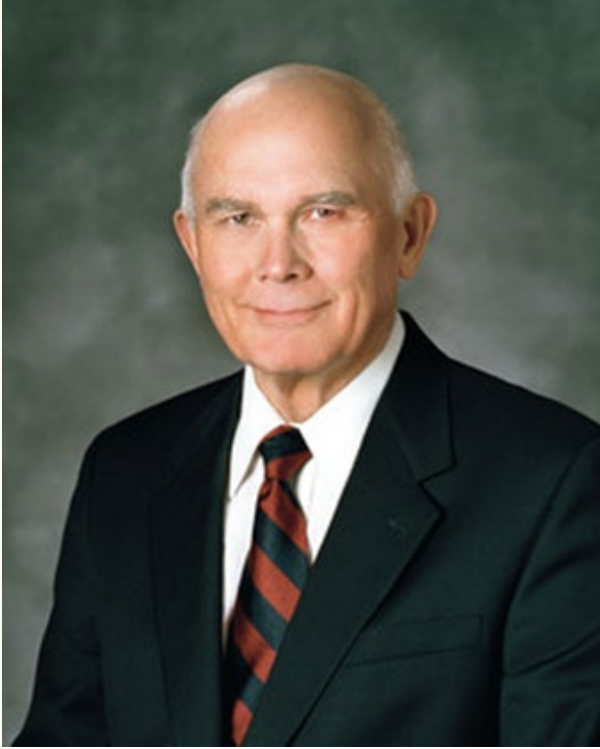
Three Week Lived Religion Assignment: (7.5%)

Central to the Bible is the need to change ourselves and the world around us as motivated by the Word of God. Consequently, for three weeks in this class, you will have the opportunity to specifically choose three objectives (one for each week) that you want to work on. These objectives may be personal or community based, but they should in some way help you live better some aspect of the BYU aims: spiritually strengthening, intellectually enlarging, character building, leading to lifelong learning and service. They should also be in some way motivated by what we have learned in our study of the Old Testament. Possible objectives could be working on prayer, forgiveness, service, empathy, noticing others, or courage. Or it could be becoming more informed on an issue, helping a particular organization, or speaking out.

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- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke about one's need to read with the properly positioned heart and attitude: "What we get from a book, especially a sacred text, is mostly dependent on what we take to its reading — in desire and readiness to learn, and in attunement to the light communicated by the Spirit of the Lord."
- *Ensign*, May 2006, 77

A Surprising Event

In antiquity, conquest and exile usually spelled the end of an ethnic national group. Conquered peoples traded their defeated god for the victorious god of their conquerors. Through cultural and religious assimilation, the conquered nation disappeared as a distinctive entity. Indeed, that is what happened to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel after 722 B.C.E. They were lost to history. But it did not happen to those members of the Israelite nation who lived in the southern kingdom of Judah (the Judeans). Despite the demise of their national political base in 586 B.C.E., the Judeans, alone among the many peoples who have figured in ancient Near Eastern history—Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, Hittites, Phoenicians, Hurrians, Canaanites—emerged after the death of their state, and produced a community and a culture that can be traced, through various twists and turns, transformations and vicissitudes, down to the modern period. And these Judeans carried with them a radical new idea, a sacred scripture, and a set of traditions that would lay the foundation for the major religions of the western world: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (Dr. Christine Hayes, Introduction to the Bible, 2)



So, what is this radical new idea that shaped a culture and enabled its survival not only into later antiquity but even into the present day in some form?

The Israelite Idea

Scholars have postulated that the conception of the universe widespread among ancient peoples was one in which the various natural forces were understood to be imbued with divine power, to be in some sense divinities themselves. The earth was a divinity, the sky was a divinity, the water was a divinity, or possessed divine powers. In other words, the gods were *identical with or immanent in* the forces of nature. There were thus many gods, and no one single god was all powerful. . . .

The Israelite Idea: there was one divine power, one god. More important than this god's singularity was the fact that this god was outside of and above nature. This god was not identified with nature; he transcended nature. This god was not known through nature or natural phenomena; he was known through history and a particular relationship with humankind. This idea—which seems simple at first and not so very revolutionary—affected every aspect of Israelite culture and in ways that will become clear ensured the survival of the ancient Israelites as an ethnic –religious entity.



What is the “Old” Testament?

- **Testament:** here means “covenant,” but the meaning of “witness” works as well
- **Old?**
 - Jewish View
 - the God’s covenant with ethnic Israel and the Law of Moses are still in effect
 - Preferred: “Hebrew Bible” or better, *Tanakh* (more next slide)
 - Typical Christian view
 - the old covenant has been replaced by the new covenant in Christ (see Jeremiah 31:31–34; Mark 14:24)
 - LDS view
 - Adam and the patriarchs to Moses had the fullness of the gospel and “the new and everlasting covenant”

Tanakh

- **Torah** also called the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses
 - **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**
 - Deuteronomy: The “2nd law” established principles which are later demonstrated in the Hebrew Bible’s historical books
- **Nevi'im** – Technically “the prophets”
 - **Former Prophets:** mostly historical books, although prophets are major characters—the “Deuteronomistic History,” which includes Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings
 - **Latter Prophets:** most of the “literary” prophetic books
- **Ketuvim** – meaning “writings,” this section includes everything else
 - Poetic books such as Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job
 - The “Chronicler’s History,” which includes 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah
 - Ruth, Esther, Daniel

Introduction to the Old Testament

- The Old Testament is a spiritual record & a religious document. It is not a systematic *history*
 - It was meant to be a spiritual record of the Israelites and later the Jews, so it focuses largely on only the Jews and their immediate ancestors.
 - Over the centuries, various scholars have tried to “prove” the Old Testament using archaeology, to pin down events, locations, dates, etc.
 - The results are ambiguous, however. Sometimes archeology provides strong support for biblical places, events, and even people, but sometimes it raises more questions
 - This leads some modern scholars to dismiss the OT as little more than legend, and discount everything in it as untrue.
 - Like the Book of Mormon, the OT, and all scripture, is meant to be taken on faith
- *The text is better understood by putting it in its historical and cultural context*

Studying, Interpreting, and Applying Biblical Texts



Reading Strategies: Approaches to Scriptural Texts

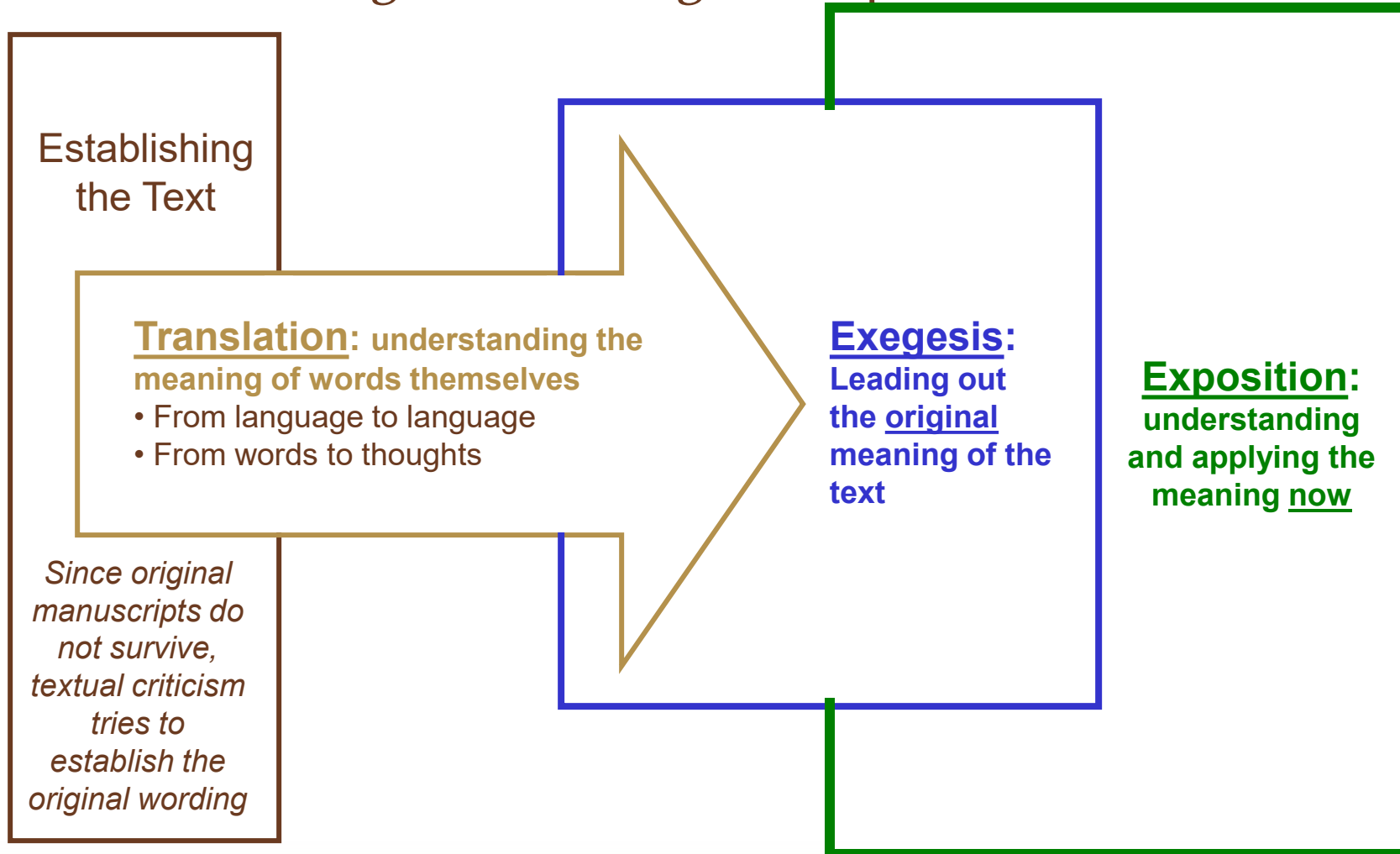
- Establish the **context**
 - Who wrote this, who was the original audience, why was it written, how did the time period and culture affect how it was written?
- Careful **reading**
 - Ask *questions*—**what** is it saying and **why** was it written this way?
- Prayerful **pondering** of the text
 - **What did it mean** then? > *Them, There, Then*
 - **what does it mean** to us now? > *Us, Here, Now*
 - *Note the order. Knowing what it meant originally helps us interpret and apply it today*
- Consider **scholarly contributions**
 - From commentaries or reference works (or such material as summarized in class)
- **Reread** and **prayerfully ponder** again

“Interpreting” the Scriptures

- **Hermeneutics:** how to interpret and understand texts
 - From a Greek word meaning “translate” or “interpret”
- **Exegesis:** to understand better the *original* meaning . . .
 - From the Greek “to lead out” or explain
 - *Definition: “the careful historical, literary, and theological analysis of a text” (Gorman, 8)*
 - A close reading and careful examination of a passage, section, or book to understand its meaning in its original context
 - as opposed to “reading into” the text what we think it means—*eisegesis*!
 - “Them, there, then . . .”
- **Exposition:** application of the meaning to contemporary believers
 - “Us, here, now . . .”
 - *What does it mean to us as readers?*
 - 1 Nephi 19:23, “likening” scripture to ourselves
 - Done more properly *after* exegesis!

Hermeneutics

Understanding the Meaning of Scripture Then and Now



Read in Sections and Outline

- Avoid the tendency to take individual verses or passages out of context,
 - “proof-texting” is the process of using verses to prove one’s own point rather than letting the text make its point
- Divide chapters into sections (*pericopes*, literally “a section cut around” or “cut out”)
 - Our verse and chapter divisions are late and not original to the texts
 - A *pericope* will usually describe one particular episode or addresses one theme or topic; often equivalent to a “paragraph” (¶)
- Delineate each section in your scriptures, perhaps dividing sections with a line
- Give each section a *title* or *identifying label*, perhaps writing the title in the margin
- Use outlines to see how the pericope fits into and relates to the entire book or epistle
 - Creating such outlines is called **structural analysis** and it provides a “road map” for your reading

Ask Exegetical Questions

- **Historical Questions**

- When and where was this text written? Who was its audience? What cultural and historical factors affect our understanding of it?

- **Literary Questions**

- What is the text's major themes and purposes? How do they affect our understanding of its content? What kind of writing is it (what is its genre)? How is the book structured and how does what come before and after a passage affect our understanding of it?

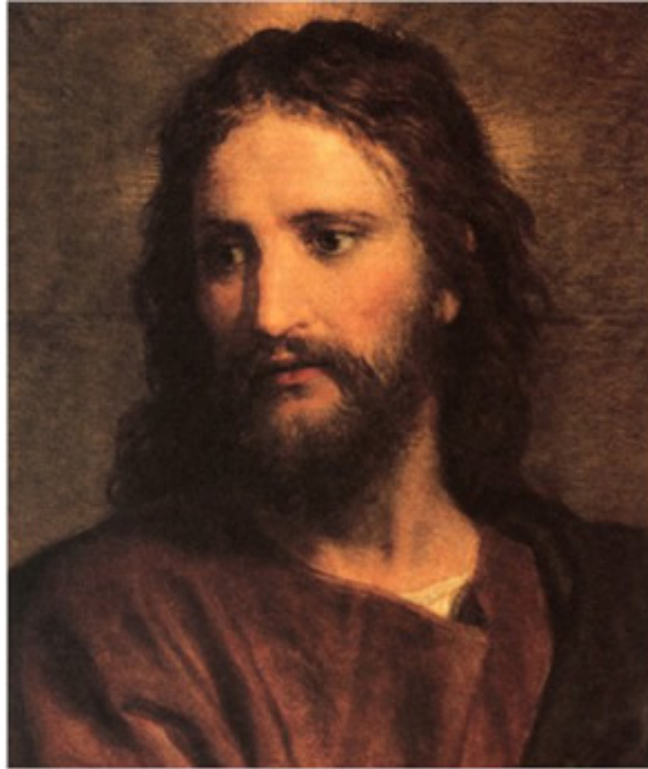
- **Theological Questions**

- What principles or doctrines does this passage illustrate or teach?
 - What does this passage teach us about God's dealing with his people? With the concept of covenants? With the themes of deliverance and salvation (thus looking forward to the Savior and his mission)?

Proceeding to Exposition . . .

- “eisegesis” is generally a *negative* term in biblical scholarship . . .
 - Instead of “reading into the text” what we think or what it means, **we seek to correctly apply the original meaning (the exegesis) to ourselves and our time**
- Once we know what it meant “**to them, there, then,**” we are prepared to consider what it means “**to us, here, now**”
 - How do other scriptures (particularly restoration scripture) and modern revelation help us understand the passage’s theological implications? *THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINAL CONTEXT*
 - *How do we apply it to ourselves?*
- **Interpreting and Applying Scripture**
 - Literal or historical
 - Allegorical
 - Moral
 - Experiential (or “anagogical”)

Testaments of God & Jehovah



Yes, men and women who turn their lives over to God will find out that he can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace. Whoever will lose his life to God will find he has eternal life. Ezra Taft Benson, Ensign, Dec 1988