



9. 2 Nephi Intro; Lehi's Final Teachings—Especially about the Fall and Atonement 2 Nephi 1–2

Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden

“And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter. Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.” (2 Nephi 2:15-16)

Hymn 239, “Choose the Right”

Choose the right, when a choice is placed before you.
In the right, the Holy Spirit guides;
and its light is forever shining o'er you,
when in the right your heart confides.

Choose the right! Choose the right!
Let wisdom mark the way before.
In its light, choose the right!
And God will bless you ever more.

Chose the right! Let no spirit of digression
Overcome you in the evil hour.
There's the right and the wrong to ev'ry question;
Be safe through inspiration's pow'r.

Chose the right! There is peace in righteous doing.
Choose the right! There's safety for the soul.
Choose the right in all labors you're pursuing;
Let God and heaven be your goal.

The Second Book of Nephi

Historical and Literary Questions

An account of the death of Lehi. Nephi's brethren rebel against him. The Lord warns Nephi to depart into the wilderness. His journeyings in the wilderness, and so forth.

- The only example of two books by the person for whom they were named
 - Why were 1 and 2 Nephi divided as they were?
- 2 Nephi, although it contains some **historical material** in **narrative** form (see superscription above), consists mostly of **prophetic sermons** (spoken) and longer **treatises** (presumably written)
 - Fulfills the purpose of the small plates to that "the ministry and prophecies . . . should be written upon these plates." (1 Nephi 19:3)
- **Treatises** and **sermons** delivered some time between c. 588 and 544 B.C.

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Structure of 2 Nephi

- **Lehi's final teachings** (1:1–4:12)
- **Historical and Biographical Material**
 - **Nephi's reflection** (4:13–35)
 - **The Psalm of Nephi** (4:17–35)
 - Division of the Descendants of Lehi (5:1–26)
 - The Small Plates of Nephi (5:29–34)
- **Jacob's Discourse** (6:1–10:25)
 - Jacob's quotation of Isaiah 50–52
- **Nephi's Discourse** (11:8–30:18)
 - Nephi's quotation of Isaiah 2–14
 - Nephi teaches from Isaiah
- **Nephi's final teachings: The Doctrine of Christ** (31:1–33:15)
 - **Lehi's final teachings** in chs. 1-4 are balanced at the end of 1 Nephi with **Nephi's final teachings** in chs. 31-33, the two blocks framing the book. The body of the text is dominated by two discourses, that of **Jacob** and the longer one of **Nephi**.

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Lehi's Final Teachings (1:4–4:12)

- Lehi's **Prophecy** (1:4–12a)
 - the **destruction of Jerusalem** (1:4–5)
 - the **destiny of the Promised Land** (1:6–12a)
- Lehi's Exhortation to His Sons (1:12b–27, **sermon with poetic exclamations**)
 - **poetic** plea "to awake" (1:13–14, 20–23)
 - **poetic** testimony of God's love (1:15)
- Lehi Blesses and Teaches His Sons (1:28–4:11, **narrative with quoted blessings and teaching**)
 - Blessings to Laman, Lemuel, sons-in-law, Zoram, and Jacob (1:28–2:13, **blessing report**)
 - **The Creation, Fall, and Atonement** (2:14–30, **teachings**)
 - Lehi's last words to Joseph, esp. about **lineage, the House of Israel, and its future** (3:1–25, **teachings**)
 - Final blessings (4:3–11, **narrative report**)
- Death of Lehi (4:12, **narrative summary**)

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Prophecy and Promise

- **Destruction of Jerusalem** (1:4-5; cf. 2 Kings 25:1–12)
 - This becomes a motif used in his warnings to his sons
- **The Destiny of the Promised Land** (1:6-12a; cf. Lehi Covenant)
 - "... we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, **the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord.** Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall **none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord.**" (2 Nephi 1:5–6)
 - "Wherefore, I have obtained a promise, that **inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves. . . . if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them.** Yea, he will bring other nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten." (2 Nephi 1:9–11)

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“Arise from the Dust and Be Men”

13 O that ye would awake;
awake from a deep sleep,
yea, even from the sleep of hell,
 and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound,
 which are the chains which bind the children of men,
 that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe.

20 *Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments*
ye shall prosper in the land;
 but *inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments*
ye shall be cut off from my presence.

21 . . . **Arise from the dust, my sons, and be men** . . .

23 Awake, my sons; put on the armor of righteousness.
 Shake off the chains with which ye are bound,
 and come forth out of obscurity,
 and arise from the dust.

- Imagery: sleep = **death**
 - **Temporal**: physical death
 - **Spiritual**: being cut off from the presence of the Lord, dying to spiritual things
- What are the qualities of true manhood and true womanhood?
 - Examples of modern prophets using this imagery: Presidents Benson and Hinckley

Lehi and God’s Love

(1:15, *poetic testimony*)

But behold, **the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell;**
I have beheld his glory,
 and **I am encircled about eternally**
in the arms of his love.

- **Lehi’s redemption**
 - An accomplished fact: the Atonement is infinite and eternal, so it has effects even *before* Christ came in the flesh
 - **Hell = spiritual death and suffering for his own sins**
- **Beholding his glory**
 - a personal vision or powerful spiritual conviction of Christ’s divinity
- **Encircled about eternally in the arms of his love**
 - How do we feel the love of God in times of need and pain?
 - How is the Holy Ghost, as the Comforter, a conduit of this love?

Lehi Blesses His Sons

(1:28–4:11, narrative with quoted blessings and teaching)

- Lehi blesses his elder sons and his sons-in-law (1:28–29)
 - Promise
 - Warning
- Lehi blesses Zoram (1:30–32)
 - Promise
- How are these “patriarchal blessings?”
 - “Patriarchal blessings contemplate an inspired [declaration of the lineage](#) of the recipient, and also where so moved upon by the Spirit, an inspired and prophetic statement of the life mission of the recipient, together with such [blessings](#), [cautions](#), and [admonitions](#) as the patriarch may be prompted to give for the accomplishment of such life’s mission, ***it being always made clear that the realization of all promised blessings is conditioned upon faithfulness to the gospel.***” (as quoted in Elder McConkie, *MD*, 558)
 - Assignment: reread and think about your own patriarchal blessing before next class

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Lehi’s Last Words to Jacob

(2:1–13, quoted teaching)

- Jacob and Joseph
 - Lehi and Sariah’s last two sons were given the names of biblical patriarchs prominent in the Brass Plates
- **Jacob is a witness of Jesus Christ** (2:4)
 - “. . . Thou hast beheld that in the fulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men. ***And thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory***” (2:3-4; same wording as Lehi’s in 1:15)
 - Apostolic witness: a special witness of Christ’s divinity
- **Christ has answered then ends of the law** (2:5–10, below)
- **Opposition in all things** (2:11–13, below)

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The Messiah Answers “The Ends of the Law”

- “Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.” (2:6–7)
- Law of Moses > Law of God
 - sets a threshold, defines sin, divides obedient from disobedient
 - No one is sinless, on one keeps any law perfectly so no one is justified (in harmony with law)
- “Ends of the Law”
 - The requirements or consequences of disobeying the law
 - Full intents and purpose of the law
- “How great the importance to make these things known...” (2:8)

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Opposition in All Things

- “For it must needs be, that **there is an opposition in all things. If not so**, my first-born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, **all things must needs be a compound in one**; wherefore, **if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death**, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.” (2:11)
 - How would all things be “**compounded in one**” if there were no opposition?
 - What kinds of opposition are there, from physics and chemistry to human behavior?
- “. . . there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, **both things to act and things to be acted upon**” (2:14)

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Creation, Fall, Atonement in 2 Nephi 2

Lehi Exhorts All His Sons (2:14–30)

- Moving from addressing Jacob alone, Lehi gives a concrete example of the need for opposition to all his sons
 - Note the return of **Tree of Life** image, counterpoised with its opposite, (sc. the **Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil**)
 - **The need for man “to act for himself” (2:16)**
- **Probable source: Creation and Fall accounts on the Brass Plates**
 - The Beginning of Opposition: **the Creation, the Devil, and the Forbidden Fruit (2:15–18)**
 - *Lehi is rather spare in his account of the creation of the earth, Adam and Eve, the animal kingdom, “and in fine, all things which are created . . .”*
 - Do not look to the Book of Mormon to resolve the creation debate; it is more interested in **the purpose of creation** and **how God will perfect it through the Atonement**
 - **Results and Nature of the Fall (2:19–25, below)**
 - **Christ Overcomes the Fall and Makes Men Free to Choose Eternal Life (2:26–30, below)**

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Results and Nature of the Fall (2:19–25)

- **Separated from the presence of God** (“driven out of the garden of Eden”) = **spiritual death (2:19)**
- Brought forth children (2:20, 23a, 25)
- Subject to **physical death**, but this death was delayed
 - “And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, **their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened . . .**” (2:21)
- **Began to progress, change, and grow**
 - “And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. **And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.**” (2:22)
- **Began to experience joy and goodness** by contrasting them with their opposites
 - *“And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin.” (2:23b)*

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A Summary of Before and After Conditions

See packet, 151–154

- Pre-Fall conditions
 - Remain “in the same state” in which they were created (2:22)
 - assumed no physical death, aging, pain (at least for Adam and Eve)
 - No spiritual death (in the presence of God)
 - No procreation (2:23a)
 - **No opposition, hence no joy, goodness, or righteousness (2:23b)**
- Fallen conditions
 - **Physical death** (mortality with the attendant effects of “slow death” such as sickness and pain)
 - **Spiritual death** (separation from God, 2:19)
 - Procreation (2:20)
 - Probationary estate (2:21, 23b)
 - **Increased opportunities “to act for oneself,” increased opposition, contrasts between joy and misery, etc.**
- “Adam fell that man might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2:25)
 - Review Bruce R. McConkie, “Three Pillars of Eternity” (packet, 145–150)

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History and Type

- **Adam and Eve were historical figures, and the events of creation and the Fall *did* happen**
- **However, the truths that this story teaches have broader application**
 - More than an **allegory**
 - Expression of truths and generalizations about human existence by means of symbolic, even fictional, figures and actions (Webster's)
 - An extended metaphor or simile (see packet, 199)
 - Uses symbolic representations to convey moral or spiritual ideas (Institute Student Manual, 47)
 - Here real people and events are used to teach “real-er” and more general truths
- **Spiritual truths taught**
 - Eden *can*, in some sense, represent our premortal life, where we walked and talked with God and where we did not experience death but where we had limited opposition and did not have the chance to experience mortality, have children, etc.
 - **Like Adam and Eve, we all start out in a state of innocence, all “fall,” and all need the atonement to overcome spiritual and physical death** (more on next slide)

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More on Temporal and Spiritual Death

- **Working definition of death: “separation”**
 - Physical death is the separation of the body from the spirit
 - Spiritual death is the separation of the person from God and “death pertaining to the things of righteousness”
 - These “gaps” or separations require a “mediator” to bridge, hence Lehi’s description of Christ as “*the Great Mediator*” (2 Nephi 2:27-28)
- “For behold this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” (Moses 1:39)
 - **Immortality**
 - not being mortal—not subject to death, decay, sickness
 - Adam and Eve, if they had “remained in the state in which they were created,” had basic immortality
 - **Eternal Life**
 - Not just “living forever”
 - Having the kind of life that God has (cf. D&C 19:6-12, where “eternal” and “endless” mean “God’s”)
 - Essentially being exalted in the kingdom of God
 - Adam and Eve had immortality but not eternal life

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Creation, Fall, and Atonement

“Before we can even begin to understand the temporal creation of all things, we must know how and in what manner these three eternal verities—the **Creation**, the **Fall**, and the **Atonement**—are inseparably woven together to form one plan of salvation.” (Elder McConkie, *Ensign* June 1982, 9)

- **Creation**
 - God creates in perfection but *needs to give his children experiences with imperfection*
- **Fall**
 - Brings about spiritual and physical death but *allows for increased opposition and progression*
- **Atonement**
 - Literally “at-one-ment,” Christ enables become more like the Father by overcoming physical and spiritual death
 - The Twin Pillars of the Atonement
 - **Resurrection: overcoming physical death through the free gift of eventual immortality**
 - **Redemption: overcoming spiritual death through repentance and forgiveness**
 - “If there had been no Fall, there would be no Atonement with its consequent immortality and eternal life. Thus, just as surely as salvation comes because of the Atonement, so also salvation comes because of the Fall.” (Elder McConkie)

Free to Choose Liberty and Eternal Life

- “And **the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall.** And **because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon,** save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.” (2:26)
- “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And **they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men,** or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.” (2:27)
- “And now, my sons, **I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life.**” (2:28)