

One of the most beautiful and doctrinally significant discourses in the Book of Mormon is that given by Jacob brother of Nephi in 2 Nephi 6-10. Well known are the farewell speech of King Benjamin or the sermons of Jesus Christ when he visited the American continent. But seldom do we recognize that the chapters of today’s lesson comprise a single lengthy gospel discourse. The structure of Jacob’s mighty speech is quite simple. 2 Nephi 6 serves as an introduction to his discourse, outlining the key themes that he wishes to talk about, and establishing a framework for understanding and interpreting Isaiah 50-52:2. These two Isaiah chapters Jacob quotes in 2 Nephi 7 & 8. Next, Jacob moves to the main body of his discourse, found in chapter 9, to explicate gospel principle and elucidate the meaning of the words of Isaiah. He concludes his discourse in 2 Nephi 10, encouraging his listeners to live in joy and happiness because of the covenants and atonement of the Lord.

The key themes and ideas of this powerful discourse are:

- the scattering and gathering of Israel
- the Messiah comes in the fullness of times to fulfill the God’s covenants of redemption
- the Messiah comes to teach the doctrines of salvation
- exposition on the doctrines of salvation
- the second gathering of Israel preparatory for Christ’s second coming on the earth
- knowing and living the Gospel as a foundation for joy in this life

Let us now turn to Jacob’s discourse and see his love of the gospel unfold.

## **2 Nephi 6—Introduction to Jacob’s Discourse**

This chapter is an essential foundation for understanding the following four chapters. Here Jacob lays out his preaching purposes and explains why he appeals to the words of Isaiah as he teaches his people. Verse 4 tells us that Jacob desires to speak of things as they are and things which are to come. In other words, he speaks of how the lives of his people fit into the overall picture of the Plan of Salvation and redemption of Israel (see vs. 5). Then he turns to prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled, which will be a blessing to the posterity of his audience and to future generations of this earth’s inhabitants (see vv. 9-15). Jacob explains that he will use Isaiah to speak of the present and the future with the explicit purpose that his people might learn and glorify the name of God. Specifically, Jacob reminds his people that they are of the house of Israel; Isaiah prophesied concerning the house of Israel and so his words are especially pertinent to the Nephites. The same holds true for us today. So, just as Jacob likened all scriptures unto his people (following the example of Nephi) we too can liken these scriptures unto our own lives.

What are the key themes and ideas that Jacob begins to elucidate by using Isaiah? He focuses on the gathering and redemption of Israel and the atonement wrought by the Holy One of Israel (Jesus Christ). God had dispersed covenant Israel due to their wickedness, yet he left a promise upon their posterity that he would again gather them in and save them (vv. 6-7). The first gathering Jacob explains is that of the ministry of Jesus Christ. But the people of Israel again rejected God and were once again scattered and afflicted (vv. 10-11). Jacob assures the people that despite suffering and affliction, those who repent and wait upon the Lord will be gathered in again a second time (vv.13-14). This second gathering will be aided by the Gentiles who will act as nursing kings and queens unto Israel (vv. 6-7). We are in the midst of the second gathering today.

## **2 Nephi 7—God Will Fulfill His Covenants**

Jacob appropriately quotes Isaiah 50 to his people at this moment in his discourse. In this chapter God reveals he will not forget Israel, he will not forget his covenants and that Israel can trust in him;

he will save them, “O house of Israel, is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem, or have I no power to deliver?” (2 Nephi 7:2). The rest of the chapter describes God’s mighty saving power and illustrates the loving compassion displayed by Isaiah as he submits to suffering in order to share the message of salvation for the covenant people,

“The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiter, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting.... For the Lord God will help.” (2 Nephi 7:5-6, 9).

Surely any of the house of Israel who feels forsaken—that God has forgotten his covenant to gather them in—can take great confidence that Isaiah, who suffered so much to preach the truth, had so much confidence in the power and reality of God’s redeeming covenants.

## **2 Nephi 8—Spiritual Courage to Covenant Israel**

Jacob continues to quote from Isaiah in this chapter (compare to Isaiah 51-52:2), encouraging his own people to remember their chosen Israelite heritage, to remember who they are in the sight of the Lord, to remember the covenants, to practice lives of righteousness, and to look forward with steadfast faith to the redemption which God had promised. Here are some of the key ideas of this chapter:

*God’s strength is mighty to save*

“Art thou not he who hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?” (2 Nephi 8:10). This clearly evokes the motif of Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage

*God will gather his people*

“Therefore, the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy and holiness shall be upon their heads; and they shall obtain gladness and joy; sorrow and mourning shall flee away” (2 Nephi 8:12).

*Israel should find comfort in the power of God*

“I am he; yea, I am he that comforteth you. Behold, who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of man, who shall die, and of the son of man, who shall be made like unto grass?” (2 Nephi 8:12).

*Israel should put aside their spiritual forgetfulness*

“And forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?” (2 Nephi 8:13).

*God rouses Israel to spiritual strength and wakefulness; Jerusalem will be restored and once again be called the city holy*

“Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean” (2 Nephi 8:24).

**2 Nephi 9—The Plan of Salvation**

Transitioning from reading the words of Isaiah to interpreting them, Jacob explains, “And now, my beloved brethren, I have read these things that ye might know concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel” (2 Nephi 9:1). Not only has Isaiah spoken of these things but all of the holy prophets from the beginning of time have preached the gospel Plan of Salvation (vs. 2) and the purpose of the Plan is to bring us joy and blessings (vs. 3). What exactly is the gospel of the Plan of Salvation? 2 Nephi 9 is one of the finest doctrinal expositions on the Plan of Salvation ever recorded, and verses 5-8 offer a fine summary.

“Yea, I know that ye know that in the body he shall show himself unto those at Jerusalem, from whence we came; for it is expedient that it should be among them; for it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him. For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord. Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more. O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.” (2 Nephi 9:5-8)

For the rest of this section I will review the key aspects of the Plan of Salvation and then highlight some of the ways that Jacob, in much earnestness, called his people to repentance that they might have the joy of eternal life. More importantly, however, I commend repeated and thorough readings of this beautiful chapter to let the truths wash over and fill your soul.

Jacob emphasizes the goodness and greatness of God for sending his son Jesus Christ that we might overcome the twin monsters of death and hell. Due to the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden we are on this earth with corruptible, mortal bodies. If we were to die without the promise of resurrection our spirits would forever be bound to the darkness of fallen Lucifer (see vs. 8). But because Christ came to this earth, took upon himself a mortal body and then voluntarily died and rose again, the bands of death have been forever severed for all who ever inhabit this earth. The first monster—death—has been defeated. However, another monster—hell—constantly lurks about us, through the wiles of the Devil, to cheat and tempt and deceive us from everlasting life. This hell, or spiritual death, occurs when our spirits have died to all things good and righteous. That death incrementally attacks us every time we knowingly act contrary to the laws of God. The justifiable demands of a broken law must be met, punishment must be delivered, and mercy must be withheld—if it were not for the all encompassing suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which we call the atonement. Just as Christ has broken the bands of physical death, he has also broken the bands of spiritual death and holds the keys of mercy for all those who will manifest their faith in his name through repentance and the spiritual cleansing of baptism. As soon as we have entered the kingdom of God through the straight gait (Jesus is the gate and baptism is the key) we are promised that the Holy Spirit will forever be our companion, and that we will always retain a remission of our sins, IF we remember Jesus Christ and keep his commandments. The prophet Moroni much later teaches the same doctrine:

“[T]hey are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.” (Moroni 4:3)

However, Jacob explains, those who seek to live after the gospel of the world and the foolishness of men will have the reward. In opposition to the Sermon on the Mount we have in here in 2 Nephi 9:30-39 what I call “the sermon for the foolish and wicked.”

<b>Sermon on the Mount(3 Nephi 12:1-12)</b>
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<b>Sermon for the foolish and wicked(2 Nephi 9:30-39)</b>
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<p>Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.</p>	<p>30 But wo unto the rich, who are rich as to the things of the world. For because they are rich they despise the poor, and they persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures; wherefore, their treasure is their god. And behold, their treasure shall perish with them also.</p>
<p>2 And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.</p>	<p>31 And wo unto the deaf that will not hear; for they shall perish.</p>
<p>3 Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</p>	<p>32 Wo unto the blind that will not see; for they shall perish also.</p>
<p>4 And again, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.</p>	<p>33 Wo unto the uncircumcised of heart, for a knowledge of their iniquities shall smite them at the last day.</p>
<p>5 And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.</p>	<p>34 Wo unto the liar, for he shall be thrust down to hell.</p>
<p>6 And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.</p>	<p>35 Wo unto the murderer who deliberately killeth, for he shall die.</p>
<p>7 And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.</p>	<p>36 Wo unto them who commit whoredoms, for they shall be thrust down to hell.</p>
<p>8 And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.</p>	<p>37 Yea, wo unto those that worship idols, for the devil of all devils delighteth in them.</p>
<p>9 And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.</p>	<p>38 And, in fine, wo unto all those who die in their sins; for they shall return to God, and behold his face, and remain in their sins.</p>
<p>10 And blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name’s sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</p>	<p>39 O, my beloved brethren, remember the awfulness in transgressing against that Holy God, and also the awfulness of yielding to the enticings of that cunning one. Remember, to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal.</p>
<p>11 And blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake;</p>	

After this point in his discourse Jacob focuses on the heavy issue of repentance. Now that he has explained the joyous possibilities of salvation for all who penitently turn to God, Jacob urges his brethren with much anxiousness to put aside all forms of idolatry, iniquity, and wickedness, that they might fully partake the most delicious and pure fruit of the atonement.

“O, my beloved brethren, turn away from your sins; shake off the chains of him that would bind you fast; come unto that God who is the rock of your salvation. Prepare your souls for that glorious day when justice shall be administered unto the righteous, even the day of judgment, that ye may not shrink with awful fear; that ye may not remember your awful guilt in perfectness, and be constrained to exclaim: Holy, holy are thy judgments, O Lord God Almighty—but I know my guilt; I transgressed thy law, and my transgressions are mine; and the devil hath obtained me, that I am a prey to his awful misery.” (2 Nephi 9:45-46)

Jacob acknowledges that he has spoken hard words of truth against the wicked but he does so out of love for their souls and out of desire that they might lift up their heads and rejoice in the salvation offered to them through the Plan of God:

“O, my beloved brethren, give ear to my words. Remember the greatness of the Holy One of Israel. Do not say that I have spoken hard things against you; for if ye do, ye will revile against the truth; for I have spoken the words of your Maker. I know that the words of truth are hard against all uncleanness; but the righteous fear them not, for they love the truth and are not shaken....Come, my brethren, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Hearken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness. Behold, my beloved brethren, remember the words of your God; pray unto him continually by day, and give thanks unto his holy name by night. Let your hearts rejoice.” (2 Nephi 9:40, 50-52)

## **2 Nephi 10—Discourse Conclusion and Revelation of the Name “Christ”**

One of the most significant aspects of Jacob’s discourse is that for the first time in the Book of Mormon the title of Christ is used. A careful study of the Book of Mormon chapters before 2 Nephi 10 shows that Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob use the terms Lord, God, and frequently “the Holy One of Israel” to refer to Jesus Christ. However, in Jacob’s concluding discourse he tells the people through revelation from an angel that God’s anointed would be known as Christ. From this point forward in the Book of Mormon the name/title Christ is used liberally, over 300 times in fact. Incidentally, the name Jesus is not revealed in the Book of Mormon until 2 Nephi 25, this time to Jacob’s older brother Nephi.

We notice here in chapter 10 that Jacob is continuing his discourse that he began the previous day. After giving his introduction (2 Nephi 6) and reading two Isaiah chapters (2 Nephi 7 & 8) and then giving a lengthy exposition on the doctrines of the Plan of Salvation (2 Nephi 9), Jacob sent everyone home for the evening. It was probably a wise move, for such a discourse would require much spiritual stamina for both preacher and listener. A similar event occurred when Jesus Christ visited the Book of Mormon peoples. After spending a long day teaching and he healing Jesus said to them,

“I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time. Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto

you again.” (3 Nephi 17:2-3)

This is a wonderful pedagogical technique, to pause for time to think, ponder, and reflect on the message and then return for a second helping. Our spirits and our minds, like muscles, can only be stretched so far before they need time to relax and heal and strengthen in preparation for more stretching and growth.

Similar to the other chapters we have seen in his discourse, the key themes and ideas here speak of the gathering work of salvation God will do in the latter days. God will raise up gentile nations to support and nurse gathering Israel. The American continent will be a land of promise and a land of gathering for many of Israel. Jacob prophesies that the descendants of his people will be remembered at this time and the promises of the ages will be fulfilled unto them.

“For I will fulfil my promises which I have made unto the children of men...Wherefore, I will consecrate this land unto thy seed, and them who shall be numbered among thy seed, forever, for the land of their inheritance; for it is a choice, land, saith God unto me, above all other lands, wherefore I will have all men that dwell thereon that they shall worship me, saith God.” (2 Nephi 10:17, 19)

Jacob concludes his discourse with a burst of encouragement and joy, which ultimately is a defining purpose of his message. That we are of the house of Israel allows us to liken these verses unto ourselves as well.

“And now, my beloved brethren, seeing that our merciful God has given us so great knowledge concerning these things, let us remember him, and lay aside our sins, and not hang down our heads, for we are not cast off; nevertheless, we have been driven out of the land of our inheritance; but we have been led to a better land, for the Lord has made the sea our path, and we are upon an isle of the sea....Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved. Wherefore, may God raise you from death by the power of the resurrection, and also from everlasting death by the power of the atonement, that ye may be received into the eternal kingdom of God, that ye may praise him through grace divine. Amen.” (2 Nephi 10:20, 23-25)