

February 5–11: 2 Nephi 1–2, "Free to Choose Liberty and Eternal Life, Through the Great Mediator"

The Promised Land

In this lesson and next weeks lesson Lehi counsels and gives his blessing to his posterity.

Lehi reminds his posterity of the blessed land that they have inherited and warns them of what they must do to keep it.

2 Nephi 1:5-7,9

[5] But, said he, notwithstanding our afflictions, 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.

[6] 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.

[7] Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever.

[9] Wherefore, I, Lehi, 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. And if it so be that they shall keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever.

For whom has the Lord reserved this land?

(those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord
there shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand
of the Lord
this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring)

Ezra Taft Benson

“Lehi, who led the second colony which came to this great land, was told that he was leading that colony to a land of promise and that none should come here save those who would come here under the influence of heaven. This land would be consecrated unto those whom the Lord would guide here.” (CR, April 1952)

What are some of the promises to those whom the Lord brings to this land if they keep His commandments?

(none to molest them
nor to take away the land of their inheritance
they shall dwell safely forever)

Spencer W. Kimball

"This America is no ordinary country. It is a choice land, 'choice above all other lands' (2Ne 2:20). It has a tragic and bloody past, but a glorious and peaceful future if its inhabitants really learn to serve their God. It was consecrated as a land of promise to the people of the Americas, to whom God gave these great promises:

'It will be a land of liberty to its people' (2Ne 1:7).

'They shall never be brought down into captivity' (2Ne 1:7).

'And there shall be none to molest them' (2Ne 1:9).

'It is a land of promise' (1Ne 2:20).

'It shall be free from all nations under heaven.'

'There shall be no enemies come into this land.'

'It shall be free from bondage' (Ether 2:12).

'There shall be no kings upon the land' (2Ne 10:11).

'I will fortify this land against all other nations' (2Ne 10:11).

'He that fighteth against Zion shall perish' (2Ne 10:13).

"But these promises, glorious though they be, desirable as they are, can come only 'if they will but serve the God of this land who is Jesus Christ' (Ether 2:12). There is only one way. That infallible cure is simply righteousness, obedience, Godliness, honor, and integrity." (CR, Oct. 1961)

The Nephites serve as a testimony that all of this is true

2 Nephi 1:10-11

[10] But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord -- having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into this precious land of promise -- behold, I say, 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.

[11] 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.

What will happen to nations who possess the land of promise but are not

obedient to the commandments?

(he will bring other nations unto them
he will cause them to be scattered and smitten)

1 Nephi 22:8,12

8 And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore, it is likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders.

12 Wherefore, he will bring them again out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance; and they shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness; and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel.

What examples do we have that this is true?

Jaredites and Nephites

David O. McKay

“Let men and women in these United States then continue to keep their eyes centered upon Him who ever shines as a Light to all the world. Men and women who live in America have a responsibility greater than that yet borne by any other people. Theirs the duty, the obligation to preserve... Christian principles.” (CR, Oct. 1942)

Lehi Admonishes Laman and Lemuel

Lehi’s admonitions to Laman and Lemuel

2 Nephi 1:13, 21-23

[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.

[21] And now that my soul might have joy in you, and that my heart might leave this world with gladness because of you, that I might not be brought down with grief and sorrow to the grave, arise from the dust, my sons, and be men, and be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things, that ye may not come down into captivity;

[22] That ye may not be cursed with a sore cursing; and also, that ye may not incur the displeasure of a just God upon you, unto the destruction, yea, the eternal destruction of both soul and body.

[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.

What admonitions does Lehi have for his sons Laman and Lemuel?

(awake from a deep sleep
shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound
arise from the dust
be men
be determined in one mind and in one heart
united in all things
put on the armor of righteousness
come forth out of obscurity)

Spencer W. Kimball

"There are Church members who are steeped in lethargy. They neither drink nor commit the sexual sins. They do not gamble nor rob nor kill. They are good citizens and splendid neighbors, but spiritually speaking they seem to be in a long, deep sleep. They are doing nothing seriously wrong except in their failures to do the right things to earn their exaltation. To such people as this, the words of Lehi might well apply: 'O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell' (2 Nephi 1:13)." (Church News, 30 June 2001)

Marvin J. Ashton

"Who among us hasn't felt the chains of bad habits. These habits may have impeded our progress, may have made us forget who we are, may have destroyed our self-image, may have put our family life in jeopardy, and may have hindered our ability to serve our fellowmen and our God. So many of us tend to say, 'This is the way I am. I can't change'. Lehi warned his sons to "shake off the chains" because he knew that chains restrict our mobility, growth, and happiness.... [These chains] can only be broken by people who are willing to change.... Those who are committed to improvement break chains by having the courage to try." (CR, Oct. 1985)

Lehi's Instructions to Jacob

2 Nephi 2:1-3

[1] And now, Jacob, I speak unto you: Thou art my first-born in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness. And behold, in thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow, because of the rudeness of thy brethren.

[2] Nevertheless, Jacob, my first-born in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain.

[3] Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi; and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God. Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer; for thou hast beheld that in the fulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men.

To whom does the Lord promise to consecrate afflictions into blessings?

(thou knowest the greatness of God)

He gave a similar promise to Joseph Smith:

D&C 98:3

Therefore, he giveth this promise unto you, with an immutable covenant that they shall be fulfilled; and all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name's glory, saith the Lord.

Joseph Smith

"I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, striking with accelerated force against religious bigotry, priest-craft, lawyer-craft, doctor-craft, lying editors, suborned judges and jurors, and the authority of perjured executives, backed by mobs, blasphemers, licentious and corrupt men and women - all hell knocking off a corner here and a corner there. Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pg. 304)

Dallin H. Oaks

"Our needed conversions are often achieved more readily by suffering and adversity than by comfort and tranquillity.... Father Lehi promised his son Jacob that God would 'consecrate [his] afflictions for [his] gain.' The Prophet Joseph was promised that 'thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high.'

"Most of us experience some measure of what the scriptures call 'the furnace of affliction.' Some are submerged in service to a disadvantaged family member. Others suffer the death of a loved one or the loss or postponement of a righteous goal like marriage or childbearing.... Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to become." (CR, Oct. 2000)

Lehi explains the law of justice

2 Nephi 2:5,13

[5] And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the law is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever.

[13] And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no

righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.

What has been proved to use that we may be “instructed sufficiently [to] know good from evil”?

Light of Christ, Holy Ghost, scriptures, prophets, etc.

What consequences do we face if we believe that there is no law and there is no sin?

(there be no righteousness nor happiness)

Marion G. Romney

“Modern doctrine [states] that there is no personal responsibility for wrongdoing.... If a man commits a crime—lies, steals, commits adultery, or even murders—he has no personal responsibility for his act.... I compared that evil doctrine with the teachings Lehi gave to his sons as he was about to go down into his grave. I remember how he taught his sons that men were placed upon the earth between good and evil, that... they are held responsible for their decisions and actions. And as the Lord liveth, that doctrine is true....

“This doctrine that man is not morally responsible for his own acts, which is gaining wide acceptance in the world today, is the doctrine of the evil one.”
(CR, April 1949)

Jesus answers the ends of the law of justice

2 Nephi 2:6-8

[6] Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

[7] 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.

[8] Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.

What does it mean to “have a broken heart and a contrite spirit”?

Bruce D. Porter

“When our hearts are broken, we are completely open to the Spirit of God and recognize our dependence on Him for all that we have and all that we are. The sacrifice so entailed is a sacrifice of pride in all its forms....

“This comes when our desire to be cleansed from sin is so consuming that our hearts ache with sorrow and we yearn to feel at peace with our Father in Heaven. Those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit are willing to do anything and everything that God asks of them, without resistance or resentment.” (CR, Oct. 2007)

Why is it so important let the “inhabitants of the earth” know that Christ “[answered] the ends of the law”?

(no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through... the Holy Messiah)

Robert L. Backman

“Jesus displayed a missionary zeal, a fervent desire that all the children of God enjoy the blessings of his gospel. Isn’t it interesting that the last chapter of each of the Gospels contains an appeal from the risen Lord to spread the gospel....

“We know, and knowing, we too must testify. Is there any question in the mind of any of us that this is one of the chief responsibilities we enjoy by reason of our membership in his Church? I began with Mormon’s declaration, ‘I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life’ (3 Nephi 5:13). Such is the calling of each of us.” (CR, Oct. 1991)

We will be judged based on what we do with the free agency that we have been given

2 Nephi 2:10-11

[10] And because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of him to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him. Wherefore, the ends of the law which the Holy One hath given, unto the inflicting of the punishment which is affixed, which punishment that is affixed is in opposition to that of the happiness which is affixed, to answer the ends of the atonement --

[11] 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.

What are we promised if we accept the atonement? And what if we don't?

(the happiness which is affixed, to answer the ends of the atonement
inflicting of the punishment which is affixed)

The “ends of the atonement” fulfills the “ends of the law” – the law of
justice

Why is it essential to us to have opposition in our lives?

(If not... righteousness could not be brought to pass)

Byron R. Merrill

"In its most basic aspects, agency is both the God-given right to choose and the power to do so. To have the gift of agency fully operative there must be competing choices and a person must have some knowledge of what the choices are and understand something about the nature of the consequences that flow from the respective choices... If there were no opposition, no competing choices - in other words, if all alternatives were compounded into one - of what value would the gift of agency be? Lehi concluded that without opposition 'there would have been no purpose' in the creation (2 Nephi 2:12)." ("Agency and Freedom in the Divine Plan", Religious Studies BYU 2005)

Note the line: “a person must have some knowledge of what the choices are and understand something about the nature of the consequences”.

How do we become aware of the consequences of our choices?

Experience, faith, and belief in what we study and observe.

2Ne 2:5 And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil.

Even the creation plays an essential role in free agency

2 Nephi 2:14-15

[14] And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for 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.

[15] 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.

In what way does the creation play an essential role in bringing about God's

eternal purpose of man?

(all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon)

In what ways do you think that the creation provides “both things to act and things to be acted upon”?

Brigham Young

“Can the people understand that it is actually necessary for opposite principles to be placed before them, or this state of being would be no probation, and we should have no opportunity for exercising the agency given us? Can they understand that we cannot obtain eternal life unless we actually know and comprehend by our experience the principle of good and the principle of evil?... We must discern and acknowledge that the providences of the Lord are over all the works of his hands.” (JD, 7:237)

Given our free agency, Satan entices us to use in for evil

2 Nephi 2:16-18

[16] 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.

[17] And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God.

[18] And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

What important role does Satan play in our free agency?

(man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other
he sought also the misery of all mankind)

M. Russell Ballard

“Like the fly fisherman who knows that trout are driven by hunger, Lucifer knows our ‘hunger,’ or weaknesses, and tempts us with counterfeit lures which, if taken, can cause us to be yanked from the stream of life into his unmerciful influence.... Lucifer will not voluntarily let go. His goal is to make his victims as miserable as he is.” (CR, Oct. 2010)

What did Satan entice Eve to choose?

(15 - the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet

and the other bitter
ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil)

2 Nephi 2:22-25

[22] 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 after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.

[23] 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.

[24] But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

[25] Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

Why was it essential that Adam and Eve had the opportunity to choose?

(having no joy... doing no good)

Joseph Fielding Smith

"Adam and Eve therefore did the very thing that the Lord intended them to do.... It was the divine plan from the very beginning that man should be placed on the earth and be subject to mortal conditions and pass through a probationary state as explained in the Book of Mormon." (Answers to Gospel Questions, 4:79-82)

One of the main purposes of this mortal life is to give us an opportunity to exercise our free agency

2 Nephi 2:21

[21] 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, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents.

According to Lehi, what is one of the reasons we have the opportunity of our mortal existence?

(repent while in the flesh)

Hugh Nibley

"You are enticed by the one or the other, and you are enticed equally in either direction. The devil enticeth and inviteth in one direction. At the same time God inviteth and enticeth in the other. Neither one is overpowering or irresistible. Which way you go depends on you..."

"The days of the children of men were prolonged... that they might repent' (2 Nephi 2:21). That's good, that gives me another day - hooray, hooray! I'll need it. Repentance is a file of intention to change your way, but you have to keep repenting. You always have a chance to repent; it's not too late." (Commentary of the Book of Mormon, 1:274-275)

Christ's atonement made free agency possible

2 Nephi 2:26-27

[26] 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.

[27] 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.

What does everyone receive thru the atonement, regardless of whether or not they accept Christ?

(he may redeem the children of men from the fall
they have become free forever knowing good from evil;
to act for themselves and not to be acted upon)

D. Todd Christofferson

"We are forever grateful that the Savior's Atonement overcame original sin so that we can be born into this world yet not be punished for Adam's transgression. Having been thus redeemed from the Fall, we begin life innocent before God and 'become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for [ourselves] and not to be acted upon' (2 Nephi 2:26). We can choose to become the kind of person that we will, and with God's help, that can be even as He is." (CR, Oct. 2014)

2 Nephi 2:28-29

[28] 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, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

[29] And not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom.

What are the two big options from which we can choose because Christ has made free agency possible?

(choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit
choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh)

D. Todd Christofferson

“In matters both temporal and spiritual, the opportunity to assume personal responsibility is a God-given gift without which we cannot realize our full potential as daughters and sons of God. Personal accountability becomes both a right and a duty that we must constantly defend...

“I am under no illusion that this can be achieved by our own efforts alone without His very substantial and constant help. 'We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.' Divine aid can be ours every hour of every day, no matter where we are in the path of obedience. But I know that beyond desiring His help, we must exert ourselves, repent, and choose God for Him to be able to act in our lives consistent with justice and moral agency. My plea is simply to take responsibility and go to work so that there is something for God to help us with.” (CR, Oct. 2014)