

# Jacob 1-4 – S03E11

“Be Reconciled unto God through the Atonement of Christ”

In a few short chapters at the beginning of Jacob, the prophet Jacob demonstrates many of the duties of a prophet, including abridging the scriptural history of his people, calling sinners to repentance, speaking in the name of the Lord, and testifying of Christ.

I’m Mark Holt, and this is Gospel Talktrine.

Thank you for joining us for Gospel Talktrine for yet another week. And this week, much like the promise that President Nelson made about the coming General Conference, this week is unlike any we’ve seen before. A lot of changes have happened in a very short time and I know there are many people out there who are concerned about the future. We’ve received direction from our prophet that normal Church attendance is to be curtailed, among many other things, for a time. And as I’ve seen testified too, and observed all over the place, it does seem very prophetic the way that our people have been prepared to worship at home.

So, please as always, if you have any questions, about what we’re learning in the scriptures, send me an email at [gt@gospletalktrine.com](mailto:gt@gospletalktrine.com) and let’s have a dialogue together, as we go through this time were we’re basically worshipping… this is our worship, is to worship in the scriptures, and see what other people think about the scriptures. This is our discussion, so I hope to hear from you, and I’ll spend more time if I get more questions.

## Listener Question

This week’s question comes to us from Lisa-Marie in Toronto. She’s talking about the question that I answered last week, about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. She says, “You said, when there’s mention of God in the Old Testament by the prophets, it is the Saviour that is being referred to. If I am correct in understanding what you said, then, two questions: Is it only when the prophets refer to seeing God on his throne that they are referring to the Messiah or Jehovah? Otherwise, other references to God throughout the Old Testament are of Elohim.” That’s the first question.

So, no. Interestingly enough, the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, and the word Jehovah appears throughout. Whenever the prophets are speaking about God in any sense “God says this,” when you see in your King James version the word LORD in small caps, The LORD, that is actually their way of keeping the name of God sacred. But in the Hebrew original it would be what’s called the “tetragrammaton,” or the four-letter name of God, which is YHWH, that we have transliterated into English as Jehovah.

So the name Jehovah appears throughout. And as we know, in modern revelation, this is the Saviour, this is Jesus Christ.

So I’ll go to your second question. “If the above is correct, you’re saying this is the doctrine, as far as the Restored Church is concerned, and not that which is held by other Christians and/or Jews. I assume no for the latter, since they don’t recognise the Saviour as the Messiah, the Son of God.”

That is correct. Well, for Jews, we’ll tackle that one first, they don’t… there is no identity between the Messiah… they do look forward to a Messiah, but they don’t see there being an identity between the Messiah and God. They’re not the same.

Now for other Christians, this is an interesting question. What do other Christians believe about Jesus being the God of the Old Testament?

It is not entirely unique doctrine, Latter-day Saint doctrine, that Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament. And the reason is, that most Christians believe that God the Father is the father of Jesus Christ in only a metaphorical sense. So, the belief is that Jesus Christ and God the Father are one being, literally the same being. And that it is one aspect of God that rules in the heavens, and when God subjected himself to the flesh, the flesh was the son, but it’s a metaphorical relationship. And that relationship between them is the Holy Ghost.

So that is the general Christian philosophical understanding of the Trinity, whereas Latter-day Saints have a different understanding. And so the doctrine of the Restored Church of Jesus Christ is, that Yahweh, as he’s known in Hebrew, or Jehovah, is the God of the Old Testament, is Jesus Christ, in his pre-mortal state. And so Jehovah is just another name for Jesus Christ.

And there is nowhere in the Old Testament where Elohim refers to God the Father. Elohim is a generic Hebrew noun – it’s not a proper noun – meaning Gods. And so therefore there are times when the word Elohim is used after the word Jehovah: Jehovah Elohim, which means “the Lord our God.”

So you’ll see that word throughout the Old Testament, but it just generally means also Jehovah.

So Jehovah is the god that the Old Testament prophets have to do with, and they’re relating to and dealing with Jesus Christ in his pre-mortal state, exclusively. However, as Jesus testified throughout his ministry, everything that he does comes from the Father. He receives the directions from his Father, and he’s attentive to them; he obeys every word of his Father. So Jesus Christ gives the glory to his Father, and also gets his direction from the Father.

And he commands us to pray to the Father. He taught very explicitly that we have a one-on-one relationship with God, our Father in heaven. And as we talked about, the Nephites, when Jesus was present in front of them, they prayed to him, and he allowed it, he encouraged it. So, that was appropriate. It’s appropriate to pray to, and worship, Jesus Christ, the way we worship God the Father.

And it that particular case when he was present, they prayed directly to him. But, he also preached, that they keep praying in their minds to God the Father. And so when he wasn’t around, the commandment was that they would pray to the Father, in the name of Christ.

And I’m not sure of the significance of all of those things, but that is the relationship. Appreciate your question there, Lisa-Marie.

I also wanted to give a shout-out to Sharon. Sharon I recently ran into at the funeral of her husband, and right now is a time for us, all of us, to fulfil one of the duties of our baptismal covenant, which is “to mourn with them that mourn.” So maybe as you hear this, you could include a prayer to God for Sharon’s family, who’ve lost their patriarch, and by all accounts a wonderful man. So I know that Sharon’s a listener, and I hope this reaches you, and I hope you know that we’re praying for you, and that we mourn with you, that we’re sad with you.

And let’s be sad with each other; that’s what mourning means. For those people who are having a difficult time, let’s be sad with them. Not necessarily jump right in to solve their problems, but feel the feelings that they feel. And then make ourselves available for what solutions may present themselves.

And obviously we want to be happy, we want to experience joy in the Gospel, but experiencing joy doesn’t preclude mourning with those that mourn. And so I ask for your prayers in that regard.

## This week’s lesson material

Well we have some wonderful chapters in the Book of Mormon to discuss. So this week’s lesson is Jacob 1 through 4 – “Be Reconciled unto God through the Atonement of Christ.”

## Examples of prophets abridging records: Book of Mormon and Old Testament

So we’ll start right in with [Jacob 1](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/1?lang=eng). And the interesting thing is that Jacob starts talking about the work that he’s doing with the plates. And to me, what this called to my mind, is a prophetic role that is often overlooked. Which is the role of an abridger. We know that Mormon wrote the Book of Mormon. He abridged the history of the Nephites over almost a thousand years, and put it into one volume that we can hold in our hand.

But, as is described towards the end of the Book of Mormon, there were so many records that they would have filled up a room. So Mormon had to read all of these things, and maybe all them were written on plates, maybe some of them were on paper, papyrus, or whatever the equivalent was in the New World, and Mormon had to abridge these, put them all on plates. And I don’t know how they handled a typo? Did they scratch it out? You can’t just undo it; there’s no erasing. So that would have been very difficult.

And Mormon spent years in this work, from the best that I can determine. And then Moroni his son, same thing. He abridged the 24 plates that went into the book of Ether. And Nephi, he abridged his large plates onto his small plates, and he gave the same task…

Oh, by the way, as we mentioned before, it’s widely believed that the prophet Jeremiah did this for the book of Kings, which includes a history of the Israelites from the time of David, all the way down through the Babylonian exile. And then Ezekiel, it’s widely believed, did it again for the book of Chronicles. And somebody did it for the five books of Moses. Many scholars believe that Moses didn’t actually write those five books. Observant Jews, of course, believe that he did.

## A prophetic duty: abridging the history of the children of God, to provide a spiritual perspective

But whoever it was, it was a prophetic task, and a prophetic duty. So abridging the history of the children of God, of God’s people, is a very important prophetic duty. In my opinion, it is part of the calling of a *seer*, to see the facts, to see the events that have transpired from a heavenly perspective, and to know what God would have us observe about the wickedness or righteousness of the people. And basically say, “This was the choice the people made, and it was wicked, and this was the choice the people made to repent.”

And only a prophet, I would submit, is qualified to make that observation. Because God needs to tell him or her – we have records of prophetesses in the scriptures as well, so this need not necessarily be only a male task – but God would reveal to him or her exactly what is appropriate. Not only what to observe about the people, whether the choice was righteous or wicked, bur also what to emphasise.

One of the things that I learned when I was a film student was, it’s impossible to be an objective observer. CSPAN was the common example that was given of a totally objective reporting of the facts, of the news. And on CSPAN what you see is the Congressional debate; you can just look at it and watch it without anybody giving you any commentary. But what we learned at that time was, you cannot be objective, because as a reporter, you have to choose where to point the camera. So CSPAN had chosen that they were going to put their camera in Congress. And therefore, that is what is appropriate for us to watch.

Now, they may be right about that. My point is, prophets do not set out to be – the way the modern press might set out – to be objective observers. There role is to be quite partisan. They understand there is an eternal war being waged, between heaven and hell. And that the battlefield is Earth. And their goal is not to relate the play-by-play of the battles and of the back and forth of this war, so much as it is to convince people to join up and enlist in the armies of heaven, rather than be drafted into the armies of hell.

And so this is one of the goals of a seer, to abridge the history of his people and to report it and show it clearly. Because some of the plans of Satan, they only make sense when you view them over a long time period. And likewise, the plans of God, they can be seen over a long time period much better than they can over a short time period.

So we find Jacob in that role, and here in chapter 1 we have some evidence that he is writing this considerably after the fact. The main evidence for that, for me, is how he talks about how the kings were named after Nephi died. So he relates the event of Nephi’s death, but then he talks about how the kings after Nephi would be named second Nephi, third Nephi, et cetera. That’s the last we hear of the kings, by the way, for some time. We don’t hear about second, third Nephi doing anything, making any decisions.

And by the time that naming convention has changed, we’re in the time of King Mosiah. This is after the words of Mormon, and we’re no longer counting on the descendants of Jacob, which is what happens from now on, to abridge the contents of the large plates onto the small plates. So what we are reading in the books of 1 Nephi all the way through the words of Mormon, are abridgements of the large plates of Nephi – which are a historical record – into a spiritual record onto the small plates of Nephi.

Now part of the large plates were included with the Book of Mormon by Mormon, but they were lost by Joseph Smith. That was the 116 manuscript pages that were lost. In any case, the abridging is going on after Jacob, it will be his descendants, and we don’t ever hear about any of these kings he mentions. But he mentions “second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth.” In other words, it may be more than the reign of one king past Nephi’s death, when he finally sits down and records this story.

And knowing that tells us he has had the perspective of some years, in which to consider and ponder about the events that have occurred. And I’ll get back to why that matters. But one of the reasons is because he needs to know, as a very partisan observer, he needs to know exactly what the long-term implications ended up being for the events that he observed at the time.

But the events are: number one, he’s observing the general state of the Nephites go downhill. And then all of a sudden one night, he gets a revelation from God that says, “Jacob, on the morrow, I want you to go to the Temple, and I want you to preach to the people about their sins.” Now it may be that they had a predetermined meeting, and everyone was coming anyway, and he had to change the content of his talk. Or, it may be that he had to call the meeting as soon as he woke up in the morning. This record is not clear on which it was. But Jacob the prophet, first of all, we already know he’s fulfilling one prophetic duty, this role of a seer in abridging the history of his people.

And the next thing he does, he gives the Nephites the words of God. So this is a two-parter. He’s calling them to repentance and he’s speaking in the name of God.

## A prophetic duty: speaking in the name of God, calling people to repentance

One of the most common roles of a prophet is to say what God would say. In Hebrew culture, that was the meaning of a prophet. So today, in the Church, when we say *the Prophet*, what we mean is somebody who holds keys, who holds authority, who is at the top of a hierarchy, and who is recognised as the head of the Church.

But in Old Testament times, that was not the nature of the prophetic calling. A prophet was often outside of any established hierarchy. And he was called by God – think of Abinadi speaking in front of wicked King Noah, he was very much not a part of any hierarchy, he had not formed a church, that would be left for Alma the Younger, one of his unwitting disciples. Abinadi was simply a man, who had been called by God, and sent to say the words that God would say.

And that is the Old Testament idea of a prophet. And in that tradition, Jacob is now appearing in front of everyone and saying, “Look, I have to call you to repentance.” And as we’ll see in chapter 2, Jacob says, “Thus sayeth the Lord.” He begins, between verses 23 to 34, he either says, “Thus sayeth the Lord,” or “I the Lord say unto you,” or “Sayeth the Lord of Hosts.” He says it over twelve times in those twelve verses. And he is making it very clear that he is speaking in the name of the Lord, one of the important duties of a prophet.

Now back to chapter 1. He also describes that he has the responsibility to teach correct doctrine. And if he doesn’t call his people to repentance when they are in error, then all of these errors fall upon his own head. And that is actually not a cruel doctrine, that is a doctrine of mercy. So when we read that, we realise God holds people responsible for the things *that they know*.

I think we all, all Christians, and most people of the world in general, they feel that God has to be this way. God is not going to punish us for something we didn’t know. And yet, there are may doctrines in many mainstream religions, especially Christianity, that don’t reconcile well with the idea that God will be fair. One of them is the doctrine of infant baptism. And the fact that children need to be baptised as soon as they can, because if they’re not, then they end up in some sort of purgatory, or hell. The Catholic belief, for example, that children go to purgatory. Now people feel it, they feel like this is unfair. If you ever talk to a Catholic that’s lost an infant, they’re very, very hurt by this, and it’s so painful, and it’s such a painful doctrine. And we feel that God can’t really be that way.

And so, this is actually an extension of that very doctrine. Is Jacob teaching that, “If I don’t teach everyone what God has told me, if I don’t relay these words as God has given them to me, then I the prophet will be held accountable for the sins of all, because I’m the one with the knowledge. So now it’s my task to relate that knowledge.” And as we’ll see, it takes a great deal of courage – nowadays there’s a common catch-phrase, which is “speak truth to power.” And what it means is, that you’re willing to say something difficult to someone who can hurt you.

And it’s often used erroneously in my opinion. Because when people say they’re speaking truth to power, they’re not actually taking that big of a risk. They’re saying things that are entirely politically correct. And they have an entire society that will cheer them on, and call them courageous. And it’s not very courageous when everyone is going to call you courageous, to say what you’re going to say.

What’s courageous is to say something that you’ll be excoriated for saying, that you nevertheless know is true.

That was the case with almost all of the prophets of the Old Testament. And literally every prophet, probably. Because God doesn’t need to tell us the things that we find pleasing to hear. Jacob mourns, in these chapters, he mourns that he can’t tell them more pleasing words. But unfortunately, that’s just not the job of a prophet. The job of a prophet is to tell people… sometimes it is, right? You tell them the pleasing doctrine of the mercy of Christ. But most of the time, what God would tell us is that we need to change. Because if we didn’t need to change, then God wouldn’t need a prophet. It’s pretty reasonable, it’s a pretty common-sense idea.

## Wickedness during the reign of the second king: Looking back with a spiritual perspective

So at the end of chapter 1, here he is saying, “We’re under the reign of the second king, and there’s now a lot of wickedness among the people. Now here is an indication – I said earlier that I would talk about why it matters, that we would have the perspective of time looking back. He talking about how he’s under the reign of the second king, and he’s sees these iniquities creeping into the people’s behaviour.

Now, later on why find out what that behaviour is. First of all, [chapter 2](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/2?lang=eng), he talks about pride. And second of all, he talks about plural marriage or polygamy being practiced among them, with probably various other forms of sexual sin.

One of the things we can gather from them being under the reign of the second king, we can gather that that king is not Jacob. Later on, Alma the Younger held the role, the dual role of head of the government and head of the church, for a short time. And then he gave up head of government so he could preach the gospel, solely. Stay with me for a couple of minutes on this, because, if Jacob is not the king, then what that means is, somewhere there is a king, and that king is probably complicit in the things that Jacob is talking about. And why do I think that?

First of all, this is society wide. Jacob later describes, at the end of chapter 2, he describes how they have become a numerous people. I’m sorry, I think it’s in chapter 3; it’s at the end of chapter 3, verse 13. They began to be a numerous people. So we can do a little bit of math, and Jacob is probably quite an old man by this point. So it has been, let’s assume, 80 years, or more, maybe he’s even in his nineties. So how many people could his society support by this point?

Well, we know there’s quite a variety of descendancy. So in chapter 1, [verse 13](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/1.13?lang=eng#p13) we learn that the Nephites are actually made up of “Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites.” So of the wicked members of Lehi’s family: Laman, Lemuel, the sons of Ismael (some of the sons of Ishmael, maybe), we know that some of those descendants followed Nephi when he left the company of his older brothers, because there are Lamanites, Lemuelites and Ishmaelites that make up part of the Nephites.

And so, if you do the math, there might have been over a thousand people in their society by this point, ninety years later. So, not a huge society, but enough, big enough where there began to be a division of wealth, a difference in material circumstance.

## The pride that comes by being wealthier than someone else

So the first thing that Jacob calls them out on, in [chapter 2](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/2?lang=eng&id=17), is the pride that comes by being wealthier than someone else.

And as Jacob says in this chapter, he teaches this, “Look, there’s nothing wrong with having material blessings. In fact, God will bless you with these things if you seek them. *After* you have a hope in Christ. If you try to gain material wealth, God will give it to you. But you will seek it for a different reason than you would before you have a hope in Christ.”

“After you have a hope in Christ, the reason you’re going to seek it, is so you can do good with it. Whereas before, what I see,” by Jacob, “what I see among my people is, you’re all seeking this wealth, so you can be better than your fellow man.”

One of the biggest trappings of wealth that we see in the scriptures is fine clothing, especially in the Book of Mormon. They mention *fine clothing*. So, you’re working hard so you can have fine clothing. And why do you have fine clothing? The equivalent today would be a very nice car. It’s something that people see. You want them to know that you’re wealthy, so that you can feel better than another person.

That is entirely prompted by Satan. Satan gives you the message that you’re not good enough the way you are, being a child of God is not enough, you have to be somehow better than everyone else, or you’re not good enough.

And therefore, you need material wealth. You need a measuring stick, where you score higher than the people around you. And that might be talent, that might be intelligence, that might be family connections, that might be fame, and it might be money.

And Jacob decries all of these ways, in which we would measure ourselves against our brethren. But instead, what we should do is bring them up. If we’re on a level above them, socially or otherwise, we should do the best we can to use our leverage to bring them up to where we are. In [verse 17](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/2?lang=eng&id=17#p17) he sort of sums it up. He says:

“17 Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.”

So he doesn’t say that nobody should be rich. What he says is “They can be rich too, if you’ll just help them out.” Very interesting.

“18 But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.”

So that’s the first part of this chapter.

## Sexual morality in the Nephite society: “Many wives and concubines”

In the second part he gets into the meat of what this lesson is. And the real point of this is sexual morality, sexual purity, is so important. And what the Nephites had been doing, up until this point, was to make decisions – not only as individuals, but as a society – based on lust.

And what they had done was read the scriptures, and they had made an interpretation, which was, that “David and Solomon, we can see in the scriptures that David and Solomon had multiple wives, and some concubines. And therefore, that probably is not a bad practice, and we can engage in it if we want.” And so they were doing that.

Incidentally, if you’ve never heard the word “concubine” defined, what is means is: a woman who has a relationship with a man that is somehow less than marriage. But it *is* a formal relationship. It doesn’t mean that the man has a mistress; it means that for whatever reason, the man doesn’t choose to marry the woman, but he still has made a commitment to her to take care of her. And she, as would normally be the case in the Hebrew culture, she made a commitment to him to be faithful to him. And so, it’s one man commanding the attentions of many women, and then assuming the responsibility for their economic wellbeing, their care. And then the children are his, and so a concubine, though she were on a lower status than a wife, was also in a formal relationship with the man. And so that’s what a concubine is.

So David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines.

Now we learn in [section 132](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/132?lang=eng) of the Doctrine and Covenants, that David himself, God had sanctioned his wives, except, obviously, the wife of Uriah, because she was already married, and he killed her husband in order to be with her. And because that he went outside the marriage covenant, and also committed murder, he fell short of his exultation. He would otherwise have been a superstar, you might say, in the Kingdom of God.

And Solomon now, Solomon is a different matter. We read in the Bible that Solomon had something around, something like 700 wives, and 300 concubines. And what Jacob has to say about this we can read in [verse 24](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/2?lang=eng&id=24#p24):

“24 Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.”

You’ll notice he says, “You and I” in the whole first part of the chapter when he’s talking about pride. But as son as he starts talking about sexual morality, then he immediately says, “Thus saith the Lord, *I*…” and when he says “I” from then on, he is speaking with the Lord’s voice, with the Lord as the first person.

And I don’t know that we hear that too often from prophets, in our day. Where we hear a prophet say, “Thus saith the Lord, *I* the Lord say this.” That has a totally different level of seriousness. It’s almost Jacob’s way of signalling, “This is the part of my message that you better listen to, on peril of your eternal soul.” In any case he’s talking about Solomon’s wives and concubines, there were so many of them, that it was “abominable before God.”

And then he goes on to make the point, “Look, I God, I took you out of Jerusalem, precisely to separate you from this very kind of wickedness. This led your people to the point at which they were about to be destroyed. I brought you out of there to preserve you. So it’s not ok with me that you keep doing this.”

And in fact, he says, in [verse 27](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/2?lang=eng&id=27#p27), this is what Jacob said. And this is something I think we all should notice:

“27 Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none;”

Now, why did this take so much courage? Jacob is not the king. The king… In order for this practice to be so widespread that he has to talk about it, the king is complicit, and probably indulging in this behaviour himself. So Jacob is not just calling them to repentance, but he is absolutely commanding them that they have to change, and this kind of thing will no longer be tolerated, and he is saying this as an outsider, to the king, and to everyone else who follows the king. He is alone in this. This is a widespread practice and he knows it’s going to be unpopular.

There are probably many people who are not doing this, not engaging in polygamy, and yet there are enough that he’s worried about it, and the people who are doing it, logic alone will tell you they’re the wealthiest, they’re the most powerful, because they are the people with the most choices to engage in multiple marriages. Those are the most economically powerful men, are the ones to attract more than one woman, and provide for more than one family.

And therefore, my guess is, this is my personal interpretation, Jacob is here putting his life at risk by saying these words. So I’ve often, in my life, I’ve often been jealous of the prophets for the closeness that they have with God, “Oh I wish I could experience what that prophet experienced.”

But what we see here is that it comes with a price. Number one, he has the responsibility that if he doesn’t say it exactly… if he doesn’t teach with exactness the words of God, then the responsibility for everyone’s sins come upon him. And secondly, he’s putting his life at risk. He’s probably never comfortable. He always has to say something that is going to hurt someone’s feelings. And they’re going to be angry with him and upset. For his whole life. Every time he goes out in public, he’s probably telling them things that they don’t like to hear, and that’s probably true of many prophets.

Now, Jacob has delivered this message, and he doesn’t say it as “This is a sin, you ought to repent.” He says, “*No one will have* more than one wife from this time forward, and you will have no more concubines at all.”

And it’s fascinating. He doesn’t talk about what the consequences personally were for him. After he’s done with this talk, he just says, “Many other things I taught them.” So he wasn’t killed by the king, and perhaps even the king was humbled by his words, we don’t know. They weren’t so far removed from having the prophet Nephi among them. He also says, Jacob also says, in chapter 1, that they had many prophesies, and many visions, and they had the Spirit with them a lot!

And so, it maybe that they just needed this kick in the pants in order to change. And if so, then that’s wonderful.

## Does God have a different standard for judging men and women?

But after he gives that verse, so verse 28, he says something that’s interesting. I think a lot of people have stumbled because of this verse, so that’s why I want to spend a little time on it.

“28 For I, the Lord God…”

There’s that “I” language again:

“… delight in the chastity of women.”

And this has been interpreted in some quarters as if there is a different standard, that God cares about the chastity of women more than he cares about the chastity of men. Or in other words, men have a harder time with chastity, and therefore, it’s more serious when women break the law of chastity.

So, first of all I just want to say, unequivocally, that that is *not true*. Sins are sins according to the individual, right? It may be that one person grew up in an abusive home, and therefore just to be a little bit nice is a great accomplishment. And maybe somebody else grew up with all the benefits of a teaching in the Gospel, and therefore to have a bare minimum of niceness, or, you know, Christ-like behaviour, is not quite the achievement it is for someone else. C.S Lewis made that point quite convincingly in “Mere Christianity”.

And I think we call all, intuitively, kind of understand that. But that is the only level at which the sin is different. It’s not because of our gender whether breaking the law of chastity is more serious. It’s certainly not more serious for women than it is for men. It’s just as serious as it is for us in our circumstances, and God knows how serious it is. And we know. And no-one else.

And I’m going to talk about why I think that. I’m going to justify that opinion a little bit here.

First of all, there is no evidence that women are the ones who are acting against the law of chastity. In other words, Jacob makes no accusation against any woman that she’s being unchaste. The people that he’s accusing are all of the husbands. And what he’s saying about these husbands is, “You have too many women, and, these women, presumably, are faithful to you, but you’re not faithful to them.”

So why then, does he use this language, “I the Lord delight in the chastity of women”? For me, kind of what I think is, Joseph Smith was translating an ancient record into English. And if you’ve ever translated anything, you know that you get the best words you can, but sometimes the word that you end up settling on doesn’t convey all the shades of meaning of the word in the original language.

So one of the meanings of chastity is that somebody would not have any impure thoughts, that somebody would not have any sexual relations outside of marriage. But it also might mean… now *chastity of women* also might mean: that women are being protected and saved for marriage.

To me, my perspective on the meaning of this word *chastity* is that it is the duty of the men, being the protectors, to protect the chastity of the women in their society. To make it safe, so that women can have a society in which they can have only one man who is dedicated to them. And when they live in that society, God *delights* in it. He sees it as *chastity of women*, because women are being protected and are being safeguarded by the men in their lives. The men are stronger, and I don’t mean to be sexist when I say that. When you look at history, that is just simply the case. The men are strong enough to impose their will upon women, and so they can either take the role of predators, or they can take the role of protectors.

And what I read in this verse, is that God delights when women have their chastity protected by men, rather than taken advantage of by men. It’s a totally opposite interpretation of “I the Lord delight when women obey the commandments; whether or not men do, I don’t care.” That is not in my read of this… There is no evidence, *at all*, that God doesn’t care about men breaking the law of chastity. In fact, he’s only talking about men breaking the law of chastity in this chapter. And therefore, he’s not saying, “Women, you have a different standard, there’s a double standard for men and women.” Because there’s been no mention that women have even committed any sort of sexual sin.

If you have any questions on that, please send an email. But that is my take on that verse, and I think it’s well supported by the text.

## How can I reconcile Jacob’s teaching in Jacob 3:27 with polygamy in the early Church?

I want to bring up one other parallel, and I think it’s probably on many of your minds, because he says, in verse 27, Jacob says:

“…there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none;”

Nevertheless, so Joseph Smith translated these words, at some point before 1830, and then, in the later years of his life, after 1840, he was living the law of plural marriage, and teaching it to others. And so, you would be forgiven for asking yourself, no matter how much you might believe in Joseph Smith, you would be forgiven for asking yourself, “How can I reconcile this? How could he write this? How could he translate this? He knows that the prophet Jacob had commanded this, and this is scripture, and he called the Book of Mormon a correct book. And yet, how could he teach the opposite and live the opposite?”

This is a question worth struggling with. And to begin struggling with it I would point you to the Church website, [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://www.churchofjesuschrist.org), and on that website there is a particular section called [Gospel Topics](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/intro?lang=eng). And the original Gospel Topics section was for essays that were written about topics that people had a hard time with, and were basically, the Church felt like everyone was getting their facts from everywhere but the official channels. So they made an effort to address those difficult topics head-on. Plural marriage was one of them.

And now there are a lot of essays there. And there are several on the practice of plural marriage, how it began, what it was like to live under that in Utah and other places in the early days of the Church.

One of the things that Jacob does say here, in verse 30, he says:

“30 For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.” ([Jacob 2:30](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/2?lang=eng&id=30#p30))

So there does seem to be an indication that this isn’t an eternal commandment. This one seems to be suited to almost every time and place, but there might be some occasions when it’s not. And one them is when God wants to raise up seed.

One of the arguments against this is that polygamist society doesn’t necessarily have more children than a monogamous one. Which is true. There aren’t any more women involved. Women are still born around the same 50 percentage. It does seem that those children who are born, being concentrated in the priesthood families and certain priesthood lines, and also woman having more access, if they’re widowed early, or divorced early, to be taken care of during their childbearing years. There does seem to be more children raised in the Church in a polygamous society. And it may have been that that was the Lord’s goal.

We simply don’t know the answers to a lot of those questions, but that is one place I would point you to, to begin your struggle with that question. I know it’s one that I also personally also struggle with.

Nevertheless, I think it’s a great testimony to the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith, that this chapter is in the Book of Mormon. It’s similar to Section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants, where God starts out by saying:

“The works, and the designs and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught.” ([D&C 3:1](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/3?lang=eng))

This is a huge rebuke to Joseph Smith, and to me that is a very powerful testimony of his prophetic calling, that he includes this, as many ancient prophets did, he includes this terrible rebuke from God that must have been so painful to receive, in his accounts of his revelations.

This is almost like one of those rebukes, because this is a chapter that would teach against one of the most controversial doctrine of the early Church. And this is in the Church’s founding document, the Book of Mormon. It is specifically preached against. And so, as unlikely as it sounds, that to me is evidence of Joseph Smith’s prophetic calling because he was willing to leave this rebuke intact, as it was in the Book of Mormon, and not try to go back and change it later, to fit what his quote unquote “New Plans” might have been around plural marriage.

Instead, he knew the Book of Mormon is true, an ancient record and therefore had to remain unchanged, yet he also knew the revelations that he was receiving from God, and he knew he was in one of these times, in which God would command his people. And therefore, it fit this verse 30, this exception that was carved out in verse 30.

A fascinating subject, one worth a spiritual struggle, and also, a question for which there do exist many answers and a lot of research.

## Resurrection as a Spiritual Symbol: our good or evil deeds are restored to us

And so, moving on to [chapter 3](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/3?lang=eng). At this point now, Jacob has rebuked them for their sins of pride, inequality and immorality. And now he starts out by saying:

“…I, Jacob, would speak unto you that are pure in heart.”

This is him being willing to give the lesson to those who are ready to hear it. And the lesson is, basically, that God is going to bless and protect you. Recall that as we’ve talked about the marvellous work and wonder that God is going to accomplish, not only in the latter-days, but throughout his great plan of salvation, one of the messages that we’ve been getting in the Book of Mormon, is that that marvellous work and wonder is basically bring humanity to a point where God can restore all things unto them. And he can provide this resurrection.

And resurrection is not just a physical event, it is also a spiritual symbol. Meaning, that we will have good restored to that which is good. That we will have evil restored again to us, if we have chosen evil. So that is a form of resurrection: is being brought before God, and having our deeds returned to us, resurrected unto us. And so resurrection is both symbolic and literal. And that is the marvellous work and wonder of God, is to bring us all to a point when we receive our due.

And the message of the Book of Mormon, is that this is not something to dread, but that we should live our lives in such a way that it will be something to rejoice in. And that there is no way to get there, without the grace of Jesus Christ.

So that is what he teaches in the first part of this chapter. Now he switches back and forth. He’s talking to people on either side of this divide. Some of you do dread the great and terrible day of the Lord, this marvellous work and a wonder that God is doing. You dread it, because what it means is, all of the wicked choices your making will be restored to you.

And there are many of you who rejoice in that day, because you can’t wait to meet God again, because you know in whom you’ve trusted. You know that you don’t deserve any good thing on your own, but you’ve been willing to place your faith in Jesus Christ and repent, and therefore, that will be a wonderful day for you, that great and terrible day.

And the truth is, that all of us are both, every single person could be on either side of that divide at any moment. And one of the contrasts that Jacob makes to illustrate this, is the contrast between Nephite and Lamanite.

## Is Jacob racist?

Now he says something here that, just like the last chapter we had, you might think of as a controversial doctrine, here’s another one! It sounds in todays language, it sounds like it almost might be a racist message. He talking about the whiteness of the skin of the Nephites, versus the darkness of the skin of the Lamanites.

Now, if we read this with today’s eyes, you would not get away with this, let me put it that way. If this were not a scripture already, you would not get away with coining this language today, and comparing your people to another people with a different skin tone.

So on the surface, it looks like this might be a racist statement. But if you read and understand it, if you start in verse 7 and go through to verse 10, of Jacob chapter 3, you’ll recognise that what he’s saying is actually the opposite. What he’s saying is, “Look, you think that the colour of their skin actually has something to say about their worth as a people. But don’t look at their filthiness,” and he draws a very clear distinction between the colour of their skin and their filthiness. He says, “Don’t look at their filthiness. Look at your own filthiness.” And the one thing that wouldn’t really fly today, he says, “Their skins will be whiter than yours. If we ever get to the judgement bar of God, their skin will be ‘whiter’ (quote unquote) than yours.”

Now, that was the way he saw it. That is not the way we would see it today. What he meant was figurative skin, not literal skin, right? We know today, and Jacob seems to have known as well, that the colour of someone’s skin has absolutely no bearing on their filthiness. So he draws that distinction. In verse 9 he says:

“…revile no more against them because of the darkness of their skins; neither shall ye revile against them because of their filthiness…”

So he actually says that they’re two separate things. Their filthiness spiritually is not related to the colour of their skin.

“…but ye shall remember your own filthiness…”

And their filthiness came because of their fathers. So you actually have less to boast about, because you have made choices that are evil. And what they have is learning that is evil.

So this is actually the exact opposite of racism. It’s just that it’s couched in language, these verses are couched in language, that would not be politically correct today. But I think we can deal with that, because that is the case in so many scriptures, right? And what we can understand is that, the message of the Book of Mormon in many, many places is that the colour of the skin does not matter. You can read that in the book of Mosiah and in the book of Alma, that salvation is open to all, regardless of skin colour. That is a consistent message throughout the Book of Mormon.

And so here, though you might read this and think that, the Book of Mormon *seems* to be teaching that there’s something wrong with dark colour of skin, Jacob in fact has the opposite belief. What he believes is, that what’s important is on the inside, and that we all have to worry about our own worthiness before God. And if we choose some arbitrary measure of appearance of what somebody else with their righteousness might be, then we are judging the wrong thing. It’s our own filthiness that we should be concerned with.

## Individual Choices versus Societal Choices

Now this brings up another point. He talks about how their filthiness is because of their fathers. And earlier in chapter 2, he was talking about another aspect of sin that has spread across an entire society. So the Lamanites are wicked because their fathers passed this sin down to them. And he says to the Nephites, “They are obeying the law of chastity and you’re not. They’re doing better at this than you are. And you run the risk, of doing what their fathers did to them, which is pass a sin onto your children, which could lead to their destruction. Who do you think, whose head do you think those sins will be put on? Theirs, or yours? They will certainly be put on yours. So, the people who receive evil learning will *not* be held accountable for that learning. Instead, the accountability for that evil will go onto the head of the person who taught it. And you’re teaching your children this evil thing, this breaking of the law of chastity, that not even the Lamanites stoop to.”

And therefore, there is a level of sin, there is an individual sin, where we make choices for ourselves, and our own soul.

And then we make societal choices. How does our society treat the poor? How does our society view sexual morality? How does our society treat sacred things, like the doctrine of Christ and prophets, and the voice of prophets that come among them, and the scriptures?

So these are the societal indications of sin. And they have consequences, they have accountability, that is paid at a societal level. So each of us make individual choices, and we pay for those, we bear the consequences of those choices individually. And then as a society we also make choices. And this is also a theme that runs throughout the Book of Mormon. It’s more of an undercover theme. This is where it’s being introduced. Here is where it’s finally coming fully into flower, this idea for the need for an entire society to be righteous, and not just individuals to be righteous. Or else, the whole society would pay the price.

And so watch for that idea to develop and unfold as we read the Book of Mormon.

Now in chapter 4, Jacob is done with his sermon, and now he’s just making a note about writing scriptures, the process of writing scriptures in general. And he rejoices in the scriptures that he’s writing, and the testimony they bear of Jesus Christ.

## God shows us our weakness that we may know his grace

In [verse 7](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/4?lang=eng&id=7#p7) he talks about how we are shown our weakness, God shows our weakness. Again, we have a foundation for [Ether 12:27](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/ether/12?lang=eng&id=27#p27). Jacob here says:

“…God showeth us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace, and his great condescensions unto the children of men, that we have power to do these things.”

By these things he means: a hope in Christ, that we can work miracles, and that we can receive salvation from God. He says that it is by God showing us our weaknesses that we can know of his grace.

Now there is another verse, as I mentioned, [Ether 12:27](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/ether/12?lang=eng&id=27#p27), that ties God showing us our weakness to his grace.

“And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness… and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me.”

So the prophet, the Book of Mormon, there’s another verse that ties these two things together; it’s not just having the weakness, it’s God showing us our weakness, that brings us to his grace.

So compare and contrast – if you remember there were some verses that we talked about last time – and then this verse, [Jacob 4:7](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/4?lang=eng&id=7#p7) with Ether 12:27. Moroni did not pull that doctrine out of thin air, it was firmly rooted in the early chapters of the Book of Mormon, that he had read countless times, undoubtedly.

So an important doctrine there.

## Do we believe in an interventionist God? How should we pray, so that God will change the world?

In verse 9 we learn… Now there are people who have differing beliefs about God. Some people believe that God set the universe in motion, he knew everything in advance, so he put it exactly how it needed to be. He’s a great clockmaker, in other words.

There are modern religions who actively debate whether God intervenes in the world. It’s the debate about *an interventionist God,* is the name of it. And this verse tells us exactly where the Restored Church of Jesus Christ comes down on the question. Jacob 4:9:

“9 For behold, by the power of his word man came upon the face of the earth, which earth was created by the power of his word. Wherefore, if God being able to speak and the world was, and to speak and man was created, O then, why not able to command the earth, or the workmanship of his hands upon the face of it, according to his will and pleasure?”

God can – this is the testimony of Jacob – intervene in your lives. Why can’t he? If he created the world, why can’t he speak, and the world would change?

So this is the doctrine, this is the perspective of the Book of Mormon. That God takes an active role in our lives. And what should we do therefore?

Now, this is a balance. In [verse 10](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/4?lang=eng&id=10#p10) it says:

“10 Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand…”

So on the one hand, we pray unto him with all our hearts, and try and get him to intervene. On the other hand, we also “don’t counsel the Lord.” So you figure that one out, right? On the one hand you’re asking God to change the world, and on the other hand you’re not seeking to counsel the Lord!

It is a delicate balance, and there’s a real conflict there. So you’d be forgiven for thinking, “Man I just don’t know how to get it right. I don’t know how to understand.” The answer is, when you ask – and there are other scriptures that talk about this – you pray for the spirit to know that you’re not asking amiss. Try to ask for things that are within the will of the Lord.

How do you know that? Try to pray for things that are inspired by the Holy Ghost. And you’re going to get it wrong! And that’s ok. Pray for things, and be humble enough to change. And here’s the answer. It’s already given to us in verse 7. Let God show you your weaknesses. His grace is going to make the difference. Let God show you your weaknesses, and as you do, your prayers will get closer and closer to his will.

And it’s ok if they’re not perfect. Keep praying for the things that you need and the things that you want. It’s wonderful, because God does want to bless you, not only with spiritual blessings, but with material ones, as Jacob said, after you have *a hope in Christ*.

So seek for a hope in Christ, and pray for everything that you could want.

## Can we be angry with God for disappointments in life?

However, I have a friend who years ago once said that – this friend was angry with God, because of the way this person’s life had turned out – and said to me, “He knows what He did!” In other words, they were justified at being angry with God, because of certain opportunities that had never come into their life; “He knows what He did. God made a mistake, and until God makes it right to me, then I have the right, I’m entitled to be angry with Him.” And therefore, I can make any number of choices, according to my own interpretation of what I think is right and wrong.

Now, there are disappointments in life, and we may feel like God has made promises to us and not kept them. If that is the case, if you really think that God has made a promise to you and not kept it, then you can’t believe anything. If God is capable of lying *at all*, then you can’t believe a word he’s said anywhere.

The very nature of God means he can never lie.

So if you want to believe in God, if you choose to believe in God, then you have to figure out a way in which he is keeping all his promises to you. That is a choice that you make.

“Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord.”

Don’t ever get yourself into the frame of mind where you say, “He knows what He did. And God needs to make it up to me.”

“Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand.”

Now this is easier said then done, because there are great disappointments and pain and suffering in life. And losing a loved one is right up there. Health problems are right up there. And there are so many tragedies that can occur. And we can feel like God has abandoned us. That’s not when we get to make the wrong choice, that is when this choice actually becomes really important, that’s when it matters.

And it is a choice. We can seek to counsel the Lord, or we can “seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand.” That’s in [verse 10](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/4?lang=eng&id=10#p10).

And in [verse 11](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/4?lang=eng&id=11#p11) it says:

“…be reconciled unto him through the atonement of Christ…”

So I want you to read verse 11. I would love to read the whole thing to you. But you may obtain a resurrection – now I want you to pay attention, as we go throughout the book of Mormon, when you see the word resurrection, I want you to remember we’re not just talking about a resurrection of our bodies, we’re talking about the resurrection that Alma talks about, in the letter to his son Corianton, where he says, “You being restored to your reward is a form of resurrection.” That is a theme, that is a recurrent theme in the Book of Mormon.

So when you see the word resurrection:

“ye may obtain a resurrection, according to the power of the resurrection which is in Christ”

So it’s not just that resurrection will be given to you, but you want the kind of resurrection that you have to obtain by the power of Christ. And you do that by “counselling not the Lord, but by taking counsel from his hand.”

## Why is Christ a stumbling block to the Jews?

Finally, I want to point out one more thing in chapter 4, which is, he describes the Jews. This is a fantastic answer to a difficult question. Which is, “Why don’t we have more information in the Old Testament about Jesus? If it’s so easy for these prophets just to say, ‘Hey, look, we all need the atonement, the infinite atonement of the Messiah. The Messiah is going to be our Saviour. He’s not just an earthly king, but he’s a heavenly Saviour. We all need this atonement to return to God.’ Why was that so difficult for Old Testament prophets to teach?”

In other words, why is there even a division between Judaism and Christianity at all? Why would the Jews have found it so difficult to accept Christ at the time of his first coming?

And we find that mostly in verse 14:

“14 But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble.”

He goes on to talk about the stumbling block, how Christ is a stumbling block, and he’s the stone – this is a reference, a conscious reference I believe, to [Psalm 118](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/ps/118?lang=eng&id=22#p22) – the stone the builders refused has become the chief stone of the corner. So, Christ was seen to be a thing of no worth. But eventually became the crowning capstone, the most visible part of the whole edifice of the salvation that God would create.

So that’s his message there.

## We are co-creators in our own salvation

But let’s go back a little bit. “Because they desired it, God hath done it.” Now that should tell you that God is willing to let us be co-creators in our own salvation. In fact, he requires it of us.

And that is the nature of the entire Book of Mormon. That we will create what kind of resurrection we want. What will be restored to us will be the choices that we made. Are we going to be the kind of person who counsels the Lord, or takes counsel from his hand? Are we going to be the kind of person to whom God can show weaknesses, or are we the kind of people who are constantly believing that it is God who has the weakness?

Are we the kind of people who are willing to be corrected by a prophet of the Lord, when he comes and says, “God has sent me with a message, it’s not a going to be a popular message”? It’s not going to be one that the king wants to hear. It’s not going to be one that is going to fit in with what makes you comfortable. But it is going to fit in with righteousness, with the spirit of God, and most of all with the testimony of Christ.” So that is the message of the Book of Mormon, that’s the message, the powerful message, of Jacob chapter 1 through 4. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.