
2 Nephi 27 — Isaiah 29 Expanded — The Sealed Book, the Learned Man, the Three Witnesses, the Marvelous Work

Nephi cites and expands Isaiah 29; sealed book delivered to unlearned; Anthon visit foretold; Three Witnesses commissioned; Marvelous Work begun, c. 559–545 BC.

The BoM's most-extensive Isaiah-prophecy-expansion. Every detail in vv. 6–22 has precise-historical fulfillment in JS—H 1:33–65 + D&C 17 + the Three Witnesses' published testimony. Four load-bearing texts: vv. 5–8 — spiritual-darkness as cup; vv. 6–11, 17–18 — sealed book and unlearned-deliverer; vv. 12–14 — Three Witnesses commissioned; vv. 26–28 — Marvelous Work and wisdom-of-the-wise-perishing. The chapter is the BoM's self-authenticating-self-prophecy.

Ten Insights

- 1. Drunken with iniquity (v. 1).** Latter-day-Gentile-world in spiritual-drunkenness. Same diagnosis as Isa. 29:9; Rev. 17:2.
- 2. Cosmic destruction (v. 2).** Six destruction-modes — thunder, earthquake, noise, storm, tempest, fire. Joel 2:30; D&C 88:88–91.
- 3. Spirit of deep sleep (v. 5).** *Ruach tardemah* — divinely-imposed spiritual-anesthesia in response to prophet-rejection. Rom. 11:8; Isa. 6:9–10.
- 4. Words of slumberers (v. 6).** BoM is the words of the dead Nephite-prophets preserved in the buried record. Same as 2 Ne. 26:16.
- 5. Sealed portion from beginning to ending (v. 7).** BoM has sealed-portion with cosmic-revelation. Eth. 3:21–28; 4:5–7. Brother of Jared saw all things.
- 6. Three Witnesses (v. 12).** Three besides the deliverer shall behold by the power of God. Fulfilled D&C 17 — Cowdery, Whitmer, Harris.
- 7. Learned cannot read sealed book (vv. 15–18).** Anthon visit prophesied — JS—H 1:64–65. Verse-by-verse fulfillment of the February 1828 conversation in Manhattan.
- 8. Lord uses the unlearned (vv. 19–20).** 1 Cor. 1:27 in 559 BC. The 14-year-old farm-boy from a poor family was the Lord's chosen vessel.
- 9. Marvelous work and wisdom of wise perishes (v. 26).** Isa. 29:14 cited. Three-layer fulfillment — Isaiah's original, Paul's apostolic (1 Cor. 1:19), Joseph Smith's Restoration.
- 10. Murmurers learn doctrine (v. 35).** Marvelous Work brings doctrinal-understanding. Restoration's emphasis on doctrinal-clarity (Articles of Faith, D&C 130).

Cross-References

Gen. 2:21 (tardemah — direct background v. 5); Gen. 15:12 (Abraham's tardemah); Deut. 17:6 (two or three witnesses); Deut. 19:15 (witnesses); Job 5:9 (God doeth great things); Ps. 78:4 (declare wondrous works); Prov. 25:2 (glory to conceal); Isa. 6:9–10 (make hearts fat — direct parallel v. 5); Isa. 8:16 (bind testimony); Isa. 28:16 (foundation stone); Isa. 29:1–24 (cited extensively — direct source-text); Isa. 30:8–9 (write before them); Isa. 35:5 (eyes of blind opened); Isa. 40:5 (glory revealed); Isa. 53 (Suffering Servant); Isa. 54:4 (not be ashamed — direct parallel v. 33); Isa. 60 (arise, shine); Isa. 61:1–3 (Spirit upon me); Jer. 23 (false prophets); Jer. 31:31–34 (new covenant); Ezek. 12:24 (vain vision); Ezek. 37 (dry bones); Dan. 8:26 (sealed up the vision); Dan. 12:4 (seal the book); Joel 2:28–32 (Spirit on all flesh); Hab. 2:2 (write the vision); Mal. 3:1 (messenger); Matt. 4:16 (great light); Matt. 11:5 (direct citation v. 29 — blind see); Matt. 11:25 (hid from wise — direct parallel vv. 15–22); Matt. 13:13–15 (cited Isa. 6:9–10); Matt. 15:8–9 (cited Isa. 29:13 — direct parallel v. 25); Matt. 24:14 (gospel preached); Lk. 4:18 (Spirit upon me); Lk. 7:22 (direct citation v. 29); Acts 1:8 (uttermost part); Acts 4:13 (unlearned men); Rom. 9:20 (vessel and potter); Rom. 11:8 (cited Isa. 29:10 — slumber); 1 Cor. 1:18–31 (foolish things confound wise — direct apostolic-application of vv. 15–22, 26); 2 Cor. 4:7 (treasure in earthen vessels); 2 Cor. 13:1 (two or three witnesses); Heb. 1:1–3 (in these last days); Heb. 13:8 (same yesterday); 1 Pet. 1:10–12 (prophets searched); 2 Pet. 1:19–21 (sure word of prophecy); Rev. 5:1–9 (sealed book opened); Rev. 10:4 (seal up); Rev. 22:10 (seal not); 1 Ne. 13:23–42 (BoM emergence); 1 Ne. 14 (two churches); 1 Ne. 22:8–9 (gentile vessels); 2 Ne. 3:11–15 (Joseph's prophecy of Joseph Smith); 2 Ne. 6 (Jacob's temple sermon); 2 Ne. 25:17 (set hand again the second time); 2 Ne. 26:14–19 (whisper from dust); 2 Ne. 28 (false churches — direct sequel); 2 Ne. 29 (BoM and Bible); 2 Ne. 30 (gathering); Jacob 4:8–13 (we knew of Christ); Mosiah 8:13 (interpreters); Mosiah 28:13–16 (Mosiah's translation); Alma 37:21–32 (Liahona/interpreters); Eth. 3:21–28 (brother of Jared sees all); Eth. 4:1–7 (sealed portion); Eth. 12:6 (faith things hoped); Moroni 7:37 (no faith no miracles); Moroni 10:4–5 (Holy Ghost confirms); D&C 1:14–17 (Lord uses weak); D&C 5:11 (additional witnesses); D&C 6:28 (two or three witnesses); D&C 8:1–3 (translation by Spirit); D&C 10:38–46 (small plates); D&C 17:1–9 (Three Witnesses commissioned — direct fulfillment v. 12); D&C 18:9–11 (worth of souls); D&C 20:8–14 (BoM described); D&C 88:118 (study and faith); D&C 121:26–33 (mysteries); D&C 124:1 (weak things); D&C 130:18–19 (intelligence); D&C 138 (vision of dead); JS—H 1:34 (BoM described); JS—H 1:63–65 (Anthon visit — direct fulfillment vv. 15–22); JS—H 1:66–67 (Cowdery); JS—H 1:71 (translation); Three Witnesses' Testimony (direct fulfillment vv. 12–14); Eight Witnesses' Testimony (direct fulfillment v. 13); Articles of Faith 5, 7, 9, 10, 11.

Apocryphal Correlations

4 Ezra 14:23–48. Ezra commissioned to re-write 94 books — 24 for public + 70 for the wise — direct sealed-and-unsealed parallel.

1 Enoch 81:1–4. *I read the books... all that exists* — direct sealed-cosmic-revelation parallel to v. 7.

1 Enoch 104:11–13. *Sinners will alter and copy the words of righteousness* — direct latter-day-textual-corruption parallel.

2 Baruch 77:11–17. Baruch writes letters to be sent to dispersed — direct latter-day-textual-delivery parallel.

Apocalypse of Abraham 9:7–10. Abraham instructed to record visions — direct revelatory-recording parallel.

Pesher Habakkuk (1QpHab) 7:1–14. *God told Habakkuk to write the things to come... did not make known when time would end* — direct latter-day-fulfillment parallel.

Damascus Document (CD) 6:8–11. *Until the teacher of righteousness at end of days* — direct latter-day-restorative parallel.

4Q Florilegium 1:11–13. *In latter days God will raise up a Branch of David* — direct latter-day-Davidic-restoration parallel.

Hebrew Word Studies

ruach tardemah (רוּחַ תַּרְדֵּמָה, **spirit of deep-sleep**) — v. 5 (cf. Isa. 29:10). Divinely-imposed spiritual-anesthesia. Cure is awakening = repentance with wakefulness (D&C 88:124).

ish lo lamad / ish lamud (אִישׁ לֹא לָמַד / אִישׁ לִלְמֹד, **unlearned man / learned man**) — vv. 15, 19. Chapter's master-binary. Lord deliberately reverses academic-status to confound wise (Matt. 11:25; 1 Cor. 1:18–31).

pele' va-pele' (פֶּלֶא וּפֶלֶא, **wonder upon wonder**) — v. 26 (cf. Isa. 29:14). Restoration's self-designation. Three layers of fulfillment — Isaiah, Paul (1 Cor. 1:19), Joseph Smith.

chasum (חֹסֵם, **sealed**) — vv. 7, 10, 11, 17. The sealed portion preserved by divine-power. Joseph never read it; sealed-portion's release on Lord's timetable.

te'udah (תְּאוּדָה, **testimony**) — Background to v. 13. Three witnesses' testimony establishes the word (Deut. 19:15). Same root as Isa. 8:16's bind-up-the-testimony.

marpe (מַרְפֵּא, healing — for the meek) — Background to vv. 29–30. Marvelous Work brings healing of disability, vindication of meek.

Personal Application

Three practices. First, honor the unlearned-vessel principle. Do not require academic-validation before accepting prophetic-revelation. The Lord chose the 14-year-old Joseph; the Lord can choose you. Second, participate in the three-witness covenant-establishment principle. In your discipleship, gather your three witnesses — be a witness in family, ward, community, profession. Personal testimony is the disciple's witness-contribution. Third, participate in the Marvelous Work. Each day, name one way you participated today — a missionary-conversation, temple-attendance, scripture-study, service-project, covenant-keeping action.