

# “He Is God; and He Is with Them”

## Helaman 8:21–23 and Isaiah’s Immanuel Prophecy as a Thematic Scriptural Concept

*Matthew L. Bowen*

The prophet Isaiah foretold to Ahaz and the house of David: “Before the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). Latter-day Saints often interpret and teach the “Immanuel” prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 as a simple, straightforward messianic prophecy with a single fulfillment in the birth of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> Most pay little attention to the historical circumstances in which Isaiah gave the prophecy—namely, the Syro-Ephraimite crisis prior to the Assyrian invasion in the eighth century BCE. The idea of a more immediate, contemporary fulfillment is sometimes (wrongly) regarded as undermining the veracity of Matthew’s statement of its fulfillment in Jesus (Matt. 1:22–23).

On the contrary, this earlier fulfillment should be acknowledged and understood by Christians in general and Latter-day Saints in particular rather than swept aside or ignored. Understanding the more immediate eighth-century-BCE fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy is key to understanding *why* Matthew used it as part of his portrayal of Jesus’s birth and the idea of “God with us” as a broader theme in his gospel. It is also key to understanding why the Immanuel prophecy remained important to the Nephites, especially after they united with

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1. This tendency has been addressed at length recently by Jason R. Combs, “From King Ahaz’s Sign to Christ Jesus: The ‘Fulfillment’ of Isaiah 7:14,” in *Prophets and Prophecies of the Old Testament (The 46th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium)*, ed. Aaron P. Schade, Brian M. Hauglid, and Kerry Muhlestein (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2017), 95–122.

the Mulochites (Mulekites).<sup>2</sup> Together, the historical-critical and messianic readings of the Immanuel theme in Isaiah 7:14; 8:8, 10 help us appreciate the strength of Isaiah's message in its immediate context and why that prophecy, as a doctrinal source, remained meaningful to later generations of Israelites.

Accordingly, I will discuss the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 as a prophetic promise rooted in the Davidic covenant and its language (see 2 Sam. 7:4–17, especially vv. 12–13). Isaiah's prophecy speaks to the preservation and continuance of the Davidic royal line in spite of existential threats to the house of David and in spite of the recalcitrance of Judah's Davidic king, Ahaz. I will explore later adaptations of the Immanuel prophecy, including Matthew's inclusion of Emmanuel (God with us) as a doctrinal and theological theme in his gospel. I will further endeavor to show how the Immanuel prophecy—with its doctrine of divine protection, preservation, and presence—had implications for the Nephites, not only at the time of the establishment of their society but also later, after the providential merging of the Nephite and Mulochite societies. Among the Mulochites lived many descendants of King David through Zedekiah, the last regnant king of Judah.

Two statements from Nephi<sub>2</sub>, the son of Helaman, have direct reference to Isaiah's Immanuel theme in Isaiah 7:14; 8:8, 10 and the meaning of Immanuel, "God with us." The first statement comes after Nephi's citation of the testimonies regarding Christ's coming by Abraham, Zenos, Zenock (Zenock),<sup>3</sup> Ezaias (Ezias),<sup>4</sup> Isaiah, and Jeremiah, who, Nephi notes, had also correctly predicted the destruction of Jerusalem. Nephi punctuates this witness list with the question, "O then why not the Son of God come according to his [Jeremiah's] prophecy?" (Hel. 8:20).<sup>5</sup> Nephi then

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2. On Muloch versus Mulek as the preferred reading in the Book of Mormon, see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Three: Mosiah 17–Alma 20* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2006), 1464–70. Throughout this article, I will use Muloch, Mulochite, or Mulochites rather than Mulek, Mulekite, or Mulekites.

3. On Zenock versus Zenock as the preferred reading in the Book of Mormon, see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One: Title Page, Witness Statements, 1 Nephi 1–2 Nephi 10* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004), 408–10; Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Five: Alma 56–3 Nephi 18* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2008), 3022–23.

4. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants, Part Five*, 3022–23.

5. Citations of the Book of Mormon will generally follow Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009).

asks, "And now will you dispute that Jerusalem was not destroyed? Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, **all except it were Muloch?** Yea, and do ye not behold that **the seed of Zedekiah are *with us*** [Heb. *'immānû*] and they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem?" (Hel. 8:21; emphasis in all scriptural citations is mine). Nephi thus cites the miraculous preservation of the Davidic seed through Zedekiah among the population of Zarahemla—"with us"—as proof of the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. That fulfillment, on analogy, had implications for the imminent fulfillment of Jeremiah's "prophecy" and those of earlier prophets (for example, Isaiah) concerning the coming of the Son of God. Moreover, Nephi invokes Isaiah's onomastic sign concerning a royal Davidic son prophetically named Immanuel ("with us is God") as proof of the Lord's power—not just to preserve the Davidic seed of Zedekiah but to fulfill the promise regarding the coming of the Son of God through the Davidic line ("the seed of David").<sup>6</sup>

The second statement, two verses later, even more clearly invokes the meaning of the name Immanuel: "And behold, **he is God** [in Hebrew, *hû' (hā) 'ēlōhîm*]; **and he is with them** [*wēhû' 'immām*],<sup>7</sup> and he did manifest himself unto them, that they were redeemed by him. And they gave unto him glory because of that which is to come" (Hel. 8:23). Nephi here characterizes the Son of God as "God"—that is, Jehovah—who "is with" their ancestors—that is, "almost all their fathers" who "testified of the coming of Christ," just as he was with the house of David anciently. This article will further explore how both statements reveal some of the nuances of how the Nephites understood the Immanuel prophecy. Lastly, I will show how Jesus's physical presence "with" the Lamanites, Nephites, and Mulochites in 3 Nephi 11–26 stands as the ultimate earthly expression of the "Immanuel" concept. That supreme Christophany included his institution of the sacrament as a reminder of his resurrected physical presence among them at the temple in Bountiful and his continuing spiritual presence "with" them afterward (see 3 Ne. 18). Jesus instituted these symbols among a people who had a familiarity with and a lengthy interpretive history of the prophecies of Isaiah, as had Jesus's Jewish Galilean disciples.

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6. On the covenant dimension of the collocation "seed of David," see, for example, 1 Kings 11:39 (and JST 1 Kgs. 11:39) and Jeremiah 33:22. On "seed of David" as pertaining particularly to Jesus, see John 7:42; Romans 1:3; and 2 Timothy 2:8.

7. *'immām*: see, for example, Genesis 18:16; 29:9; Leviticus 26:41; Deuteronomy 29:25; Joshua 4:8; 20:4; Judges 1:22; 1 Samuel 10:6; 14:21; 17:13; 25:16; 2 Samuel 3:22; 15:36; 1 Kings 11:18; 2 Kings 6:33; Isaiah 34:7; Joel 3:2; Zechariah 10:5; Psalm 83:8; and Job 21:8.

## “Immanuel”

In terms of discernible meaning, Immanuel easily constitutes one of the most transparent names in the entire Hebrew Bible and ancient Israelite onomasticon. Immanuel, literally “with us is El/God,” consists of the preposition *‘imm-* (“with”), followed by the possessive suffix *-ānû* (“us”) and the divine title/descriptor *’ēl* (El, “God,” or “god”). As Bruce Waltke and Michael P. O’Connor note, *im(m)* “expresses a variety of comitative relations (‘with’). The most common sense involves accompaniment (fellowship and companionship, person + person; ‘with’).”<sup>8</sup>

Even more than “with,” the preposition *‘im(m)*—derived from the Semitic root *‘m(m)*—denotes “in company with, together with.”<sup>9</sup> It “expresses communal action or action in company.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, “Immanuel” more precisely conveys the sense “God in company with us” or “God together with us.” Waltke and O’Connor further note, “The locus of psychological interest can be marked with *‘m* (‘with, in’).”<sup>11</sup> As an example of the latter, they cite Numbers 14:24,<sup>12</sup> which has relevance for the present discussion: “But my servant Caleb, because he had **another spirit with** [*‘immô*] him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed [*wēzar’ô*] shall possess it.”

The extrabiblical name Immanujah (“Yahweh is with us”) is attested with both the plene<sup>13</sup> spelling *‘mnwyhw* on a seal<sup>14</sup> and the defective spelling<sup>15</sup> *‘mnyhw* in the Elephantine Papyri (“Jehoeli the daughter of Immanujah”) and on a seal.<sup>16</sup> The name Immanujah confirms that

8. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 219.

9. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, Neth.: Brill, 2001), 1:839.

10. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 839.

11. Waltke and O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 219.

12. Waltke and O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 219.

13. “Plene” denotes a “fuller” spelling with the use of vowels to aid pronunciation.

14. G. I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1:462. On *‘mnwyhw*, see Nahman Avigad, “Two Seals of Women and Other Hebrew Seals,” *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical, and Geographical Studies* 20 (1989): 90.

15. “Defective” denotes a spelling without additional vowels to aid pronunciation.

16. See, for example, M. Sprengling, “The Aramaic Papyri of Elephantine in English—Continued,” *American Journal of Theology* 22, no. 3 (1918): 357. On the *‘mnyhw* seal, see Nahman Avigad, “Hebrew Seals and Sealings and Their Significance for Biblical Research,” in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 40, ed. J. A. Emerton (1988), 14. Avigad transliterates *‘mnwyhw* *‘Immanuyahu*. In contrast to John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper, “Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew

Immanuel does not exist in an onomastic vacuum. In other words, it confirms that Immanuel did not constitute an onomastic anomaly employed simply as prophetic rhetoric. Immanuel conforms to basic principles of Hebrew nomenclature.

### **"God Is with Us": A Sign of Preservation to Ahaz and the House of David**

Isaiah 7 immediately describes the geopolitical threat that faced Ahaz and the kingdom of Judah during Ahaz's reign: "And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart [that is, Ahaz's heart] was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind" (vv. 1–2). Rezin of Syria/Aram and Pekah of the Northern Kingdom of Israel had suddenly, but unsuccessfully, attacked Jerusalem. Although this invasion did not achieve its ultimate objective, Ahaz, the house of David (royal family), and the kingdom of Judah were understandably terrified by this sudden, dramatic turn of events.

The Deuteronomistic historian who wrote 2 Kings states that Ahaz was relatively young and inexperienced when he inherited the throne from his father, Jotham: "Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father" (2 Kgs. 16:2; see also 2 Chr. 28:1). This writer also characterizes Ahaz as an idolater: "But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree" (2 Kgs. 16:3–4).

The Lord tasked Isaiah with persuading Ahaz to have faith and to put his trust in the Lord in the face of the combined Syrian-Ephraimite threat:

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Inscriptions," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 40–51, 78–79, I do not see 'mnyhw as the Book of Mormon name Ammonihah. The plene spelling 'mnwyhw confirms this. And I concur with Paul Y. Hoskisson, "It Is OK Not to Have Every Answer: The Book of Mormon Onomastic Ending -(i)hah," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 18, no. 1 (2009): 48–55, that the significance of the -ihah ending remains unclear.

Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub [“A-remnant-shall-return”] thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field; and say unto him, Take heed [*hiššāmēr*], and be quiet [*wěhašqē!*]; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah [that is, Pekah]. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. (Isa. 7:3–7)

Here Isaiah discloses the intent of the Syrian and Ephraimite attack on Jerusalem: to depose Ahaz as king of Judah and to install a man contemptuously named only as “the son of Tabeal.” Rezin and Pekah intended to install the son of Tabeal as a puppet-king who would join them in their rebellion against the Assyrians, the dominant regional superpower. This “evil counsel” amounted to an existential threat against the Davidic dynasty.

Rather than remain faithful to Yahweh and his covenant in the face of the combined Syrian-Ephraimite threat (hence the Lord’s declaration “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established” (Isa. 7:9), or alternatively, “If you do not have faith, it is because you have not been faithful” [translation mine]), Ahaz desired a covenant or treaty with Assyria. Deuteronomy 7:2 forbade Israel to make covenants with the Canaanite nations (“thou shalt make [cut] no covenant with them”). Isaiah seems to have had a similar prohibition in mind in Isaiah 28 when he excoriated Judah’s covenant with “death” and “hell” (quasi-deities Mot and Sheol, probably symbolic of Ahaz’s covenant with Assyria<sup>17</sup>): “We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement”; and when he prophesied that “your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand” (Isa. 28:15, 18).

To dissuade Ahaz from this course, the Lord spoke to Ahaz through Isaiah again and took the unusual step of offering Ahaz a sign—any sign that Ahaz could possibly hope to see—as demonstrative proof that the Lord would protect Ahaz and the Davidic dynasty without Assyrian help: “Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above” (Isa. 7:11). Ahaz responded with faux humility and piety: “I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord” (Isa. 7:12; compare

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17. See, for example, Nathan Mastnjak, “Judah’s Covenant with Assyria in Isaiah 28,” *Vetus Testamentum* 64, no. 3 (2014): 465–83.

Deut. 6:16). Ahaz did not ask for a sign because he knew it would obligate him to pursue a different path than the one he had already chosen: a vassal covenant/treaty with Assyria.

It is significant that the Lord's response to Ahaz's refusal was not simply addressed to Ahaz himself but to the "house of David": "And he said, Hear ye now [*šim 'û-nā'*], O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?" (Isa. 7:13). The plural grammatical forms further suggest *the sign that followed was also directed more broadly to the "house of David" and not just Ahaz himself.*

Isaiah declares that the Lord is going to give the "house of David" a sign anyway—a sign indicative of the Lord's intent to preserve the house of David, but also with negative consequences for Judah (see below): "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you [*lākem*] a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [*'immānû 'ēl*]" (Isa. 7:14; 2 Ne. 17:14). Note Isaiah's additional use of the preposition + second-person masculine plural suffix pronoun "(to) you" here to address the house of David. The child "Immanuel" would constitute a sign to the house of David that "God" would be "with" them to protect the Davidic line in spite of Ahaz's own recalcitrance and determination to pursue a covenant/treaty with Tiglath-pileser and the Assyrians in the face of the Syro-Ephraimite threat (2 Kgs. 16:5–7) and later in the face of an armed invasion from the Assyrians themselves.

Notwithstanding Isaiah's prophetic pronouncement, Ahaz continued to pursue his own will rather than Yahweh's will and the prophet's counsel. He became a vassal to the king of Assyria by a vassal covenant/treaty: "So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, **I am thy servant and thy son:** come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria" (2 Kgs. 16:7–8; compare 2 Chron. 28:16).

The verses that immediately follow the giving of the sign in Isaiah 7:14 confirm an immediate eighth-century-BCE historical fulfillment of this prophecy in connection with the Syro-Ephraimite crisis and subsequent Assyrian imperial aggression: "Butter and honey shall he [Immanuel] eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings" (Isa. 7:15–16). In other words, this prophecy would find fulfillment while Immanuel was still young.



Historical questions about Isaiah 7:14 tend to revolve around identities: Who was *hā'almâ*, “the virgin”? And who was the child “Immanuel”? Robert Alter suggests that *hā'almâ* “might be the prophet’s wife because there is precedent for prophets begetting symbolic sons, or she might be a woman in the house of David.”<sup>18</sup> Joseph Jensen recommends that the *'almâ* “referred to is a wife of Ahaz, and the son to be born would be a child of Ahaz; as such he would be a guarantee of the continuation of the Davidic dynasty, to which perpetuity has been promised (2 Sam. 7) and from which great things have been expected.”<sup>19</sup> The identity of the eighth-century-BCE “Immanuel” is even more problematic. Some scholars see Hezekiah as the subject of the divine son/royal figure prophecies of Isaiah 7–12. However, if the Deuteronomistic chronology of 2 Kings 16:2; 18:1–2 is correct, we can categorically rule out Hezekiah.<sup>20</sup> J. F. A. Sawyer writes, “The chronological problems are virtually insuperable, as Hezekiah must have been already in his twenties.”<sup>21</sup>

If Jensen is correct in his identification, “Immanuel” would have been a royal Davidic son, his name constituting a “sign” that “God” was “with” the house of David and the kingdom of Judah in fulfillment of divine promises (see, for example, 2 Sam. 7:13, 15–16 and Ps. 89:4 [Masoretic Text v. 5]). In fact, the name amounts to an expression of faith such as Ahaz, the house of David, and the kingdom of Judah *should have had* in the Lord: “God is with us!” We note the similarity of the name Immanuel and its meaning to Nathan’s statement to David, “The Lord is with thee [*yhw̄h immāk*]” (2 Sam. 7:3), and the Lord’s statement to David, “And I was with thee [*wā'ehyeh 'immēkā*]” (2 Sam. 7:9; compare also Ps. 89:24 [Masoretic Text v. 25]). It is reasonable within the given evidence to see the eighth-century-BCE “Immanuel” as a probable son of Ahaz and thus a “son of David,” as Jesus Christ would be later. In any case, Immanuel as an omen ultimately “means that the dynasty of the Davidic kings still has a future.”<sup>22</sup>

18. Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible, Volume 2: Prophets* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), 645.

19. Joseph Jensen, “Immanuel,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 5 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:393.

20. See, for example, John Gee, “How Not to Read Isaiah,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 37 (2020): 34–35.

21. J. F. A. Sawyer, “Immanuel,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 3:24.

22. Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 313.



Ahaz's and Judah's refusing to have faith in the Lord during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis and putting their trust in the Assyrians had negative long-term consequences. Jensen writes, "Nevertheless, because Ahaz had refused to believe and to repose his faith in the Lord alone, the trust he had placed in Assyria would occasion terrible devastation for Judah."<sup>23</sup> Isaiah further predicted,

Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel [*'immānū 'ēl*]. (Isa. 8:6–8; 2 Ne. 18:6–8)

In addition to cultic/religious compromises, vassalage to Assyria would mean submission and payment to Assyria in perpetuity. When payment stopped, as it did under Hezekiah, the Assyrians came calling.

"Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for **God is with us** [*'immānū 'ēl*]" (Isa. 8:10; 2 Ne. 18:10). Isaiah foretold not only the failure of the Syro-Ephraimite confederation but also Ahaz's ill-advised alliance with the Assyrians. Isaiah also foresaw that the Davidic dynasty would survive in spite of Ahaz and future unworthy representatives (for example, Manasseh, Amon, and others).

That this doctrine had perhaps (then) present appeal and staying power is evident from Psalms 46, one of the hymns of the Jerusalem temple,<sup>24</sup> which twice invokes the Immanuel doctrine: "The Lord of hosts is with us [*'immānū*]; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah" (Ps. 46:7, 11 [Masoretic Text vv. 8, 12]). As expressed in this psalm, the Immanuel doctrine conveys the notion of divine protection and preservation for the Lord's covenant people.

Even after the catastrophe of the Babylonian exile, the return of some Jews to Jerusalem, and the rebuilding of the temple, the prophet Zechariah declared, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go

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23. Jensen, "Immanuel," 393.

24. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 45.

with you: for we have heard that **God is with you** [*’ēlōhîm ’immākem*]” (Zech. 8:23; compare Zech. 10:5). Matthew may have viewed Zechariah’s prophecy as an extension of the Immanuel prophecy, just as he viewed Zechariah 9:9, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee” (Matt. 21:5), as a fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy (see especially Matt. 1:23; 28:20).

### **“Emmanuel, Which Being Interpreted Is, God with Us”: Matthew’s Interpretation and Application of the Immanuel Prophecy**

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Isaiah 7:14 and the name “Immanuel” for Matthew’s depiction of Jesus. The traditional Christian interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, of course, originates with Matthew’s incorporation of the Immanuel prophecy into his narrative of Jesus’s birth and his declaration of its fulfillment:

But while he [Joseph] thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name **JESUS** [*Jēsoun* < Hebrew/Aramaic *yēšûa*]: for he shall save [*sōsei* < Heb. *yōšia*] his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name **Emmanuel**, which being interpreted is, **God with us** [*meth’ hēmōn ho theos*]. (Matt. 1:20–23)

The Greek text of Matthew follows the spelling of the name as *Emmanouēl* from the LXX (Septuagint) version of Isaiah 7:14 and the precise wording of LXX Isaiah 8:8, where the name is rendered by its meaning *meth’ hēmōn ho theos* (“with us [is] God”). Also notable is the wording of LXX Isaiah 8:10, where the meaning of the name Immanuel finds expression in slogan form: *hoti meth’ hēmōn kyrios ho theos* (“for with us [is] Lord-the-God”). One implication of Matthew’s use of the LXX text is that he sees Jesus as the *kyrios ho theos* from Isaiah 8:10.

Much recent historical-critical analysis has tended to focus on Matthew’s apparent severance of Isaiah 7:14 from its immediate historical setting within the Syro-Ephraimite crisis without any further attempt to fathom how the gospel writer *understood its historical implications for the house of David and its divine preservation* up to the time of Jesus. The text of Isaiah 7 twice emphasizes the importance of the events described therein as they pertained to “the house of David” (Isa. 7:2, 13). Besides the title “Christ” (*christos*), the first title that Matthew uses to describe

Jesus is "son of David." Famously, Matthew's entire genealogy for Jesus with its three engineered<sup>25</sup> sets of fourteen generations constitutes a gematria<sup>26</sup> ( $14 = 7$  [daleth = 4] + 7 [waw = 6] + 7 [daleth = 4] = 717 [DVD]) that emphasizes the strength of Jesus's connection to David and the Davidic dynasty.

With the phrase *touto de holon gegonen* ("now all this was done" or "all this happened"), Matthew cites every foregoing detail mentioned in Matthew 1, including the genealogy and Jesus's naming in terms of *yš' / sōsei*, as contributing to the ultimate, overarching fulfillment of Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy. A detail that exegetes often overlook is that Matthew would have understood the historical implications of the Immanuel prophecy for the divine preservation of the house of David: that the Davidic royal line was destined to continue according to divine covenant. He includes Ahaz in, rather than omits him from, his genealogy for Jesus (see Matt. 1:9). Matthew also understood that the royal line continued despite its political disenthronement when Nebuchadnezzar II ended Zedekiah's reign at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Matthew's expansive view of Isaiah 7:14 thus reflects the outlook of Jeremiah 33:17–21.

Matthew expands the theological symbol of the name Immanuel from "God with us"—a sign that Yahweh was "with" Jerusalem and the house of David to preserve them from annihilation—into the more powerful idea of "God with us" in the flesh. As New Testament exegetes have noted, Emmanuel or "God with us" becomes an important theme for Matthew's depiction of Jesus,<sup>27</sup> surfacing in several additional key texts in his gospel.

Matthew first recalls the "Emmanuel" birth fulfillment when Jesus responds to his disciples who have failed to heal a boy described as

25. Aaron M. Gale observes, "To keep the generational pattern intact at fourteen, Matthew is forced to omit five kings: Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, Jehoahaz, and Jehoiakim. In addition, the third and final set contains thirteen names, which may suggest that the fourteenth and final generation is that of the church." "The Gospel According to Matthew," in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 2nd ed., ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 11.

26. Gematria is an ancient Jewish hermeneutical technique (or method of interpretation) that exploits the numerical value of words and names, since letters were used as numerals in ancient Hebrew (as in ancient Greek and Latin). The name David in Hebrew numerals—D + W [or V] + D (4 + 6 + 4)—adds up to fourteen. Matthew's genealogy for Jesus is widely recognized as a New Testament example of this practice.

27. See, for example, David D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 138–219.

*selēniazetai* (usually understood today as “to experience epileptic seizures, [to] *be an epileptic*”<sup>28</sup> rather than “to act like a lunatic”): “Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, **how long shall I be with you** [*eōs pote met’ hymōn esomai*]? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me” (Matt. 17:17). Regarding this incident, David Kupp writes, “This attempt by the disciples to heal the epileptic boy constitutes the first independent step of ministry, in line with their Matthew 10 commissioning. Their failure again points out their inability yet to undertake the larger mission task.”<sup>29</sup> Although Jesus is physically present “with” them, that is not yet sufficient in itself to generate the faith required to perform what their mission will later require.

Kupp further observes, “Jesus’ exasperated ‘How much longer must I be with you?’ underlies his dilemma as their leader and teacher: when would they learn the correlation between his mission, Emmanuel persona, and their faith? When would they understand that his being μεθ’ ὑμῶν [*meth’ hymon*<sup>30</sup>] with divine, messianic power is more truly empowering than their requirement for his physical intervention?”<sup>31</sup> We should note here that the inclusion of Jesus’s statement reemphasizes the point made explicit at the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel: that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s Immanuel prophecy in an even more precise way as God “with” his people—especially his disciples—in the flesh.

At the same time, Jesus hinted that his physical presence with them would soon come to an end. Nevertheless, Jesus promised his continued presence with his disciples as they would gather and meet together in his name: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them [*ekei eimi en mesō autōn*]” (Matt. 18:20). This promise can also be viewed as an ecclesiastical<sup>32</sup> expression of the Immanuel/Emmanuel idea, especially since it anticipates its ritual expression in his institution of the sacrament.

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28. Walter Bauer and others, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. by Fredrick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “σεληνιαζομαι,” emphasis original, bolding removed. Originally it meant “to be moonstruck.” They further note, “In the ancient world epileptic seizure was associated with [the] transcendent powers of the moon.”

29. Kupp, *Matthew’s Emmanuel*, 84.

30. *meth’ hymon* = “with you” (plural).

31. Kupp, *Matthew’s Emmanuel*, 84.

32. Jesus’s promise in Matthew 18:20 is made in the immediate narratological context of the only two mentions of “church” (*ekklēsia*) in any of the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew 16:18 and 18:17.

In fact, the next manifestation of Matthew's Emmanuel theme occurs in his account of Jesus's institution of the ordinance of the sacrament as an appropriation of elements of the Passover commemoration:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament [*touto gar estin to haima mou tēs diathēkēs*], which is shed for many for the remission of sins. . . . I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new **with you** [*meth' hymōn*] in my Father's kingdom. (Matt. 26:26–29)

Matthew here incorporates Jesus's institution of the sacrament, including the wine as representing "my blood of the new testament," into his Emmanuel theme by mentioning the Savior's promise to partake of sacramental wine "new with [them] in [the] Father's kingdom." The sacrament offers us the most sublime ritual expression of the Immanuel idea (see further below).

The ordinance of the sacrament introduced on this sacred occasion, on at least one level, represents "the earnest [*arrabōn*, i.e., 'a "pledge or deposit guaranteeing what is to come"'<sup>33</sup>] of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; see also Eph. 1:14, "is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession"). In other words, it constitutes access to the gift of the Holy Ghost, which the Savior promised his disciples that very same night in lieu of his physical presence (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13–14; compare John 14:16–18), but it also points "us" forward to the future reality in which he will always be physically present "with them" (compare 1 Thes. 4:17).

The final instance of Matthew's Emmanuel theme—and the closing bracket of Gospel-length *inclusio* that stretches back to Matthew 1:23—occurs as part of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16–20). At the conclusion of the commission, Jesus declared: "Lo, I am with you [*egō meth' hymōn eimi*] alway[s], even unto the end of the world. Amen." Kupp writes, "If there is anything retrospective about the christology of

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33. William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006), 520. *Arrabōn* represents a Semitic loanword into Greek. Compare Hebrew *ērābōn* in Bauer and others, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. "ἄραβν." Bauer and coauthors gloss *arrabōn* as "payment of part of a purchase price in advance, *first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge*" (emphasis original, bolding removed).

[Matthew 1:23] it begins with and stems from the promise of [Matthew 28:20], as part of the author's internal design of inclusio."<sup>34</sup>

The syntax of Matthew's Greek paints a verbal picture: I-with-you-am. Jesus will not only be "with" the disciples, but he will be *around* them. This "departure from ordinary word order," including a "separation of words usually belonging together," constitutes a rhetorical figure known as *hyperbaton*.<sup>35</sup> And it should pass without notice that the separated words, *egō . . . eimi*, comprise the divine identification "I am" from Exodus 3:14 used so abundantly throughout the Gospel of John to identify Jesus as Jehovah.

When considering Jesus's promise "I am with you always[s]" (Matt. 28:20) in connection with the institution of the sacrament (Matt. 26:26–29) and the future promise of partaking thereof "with" his disciples, Latter-day Saints can better comprehend the power of the covenantal promise in the sacrament prayers "that they may always have his Spirit to be with them" (D&C 20:77; see below). For Matthew, the name *Emmanouēl* was not just a sign that "God" was "with" the house of David in guaranteeing the temporal surety of David's political dynasty in the face of the Ephraimite and Syrian "confederacy" against Ahaz. Neither was it simply a sign that "God" was "with" the kingdom of Judah in the face of the Assyrian threat. For Matthew and his depiction of Jesus, *Emmanouēl* was the sign that literally "God is with us" in the flesh as David's rightful descendant ("Son of David"), a title used in Matthew's Gospel far more than any of the other Gospel accounts.<sup>36</sup>

## Early Nephite Interpretations of the Immanuel Prophecy

Nephi<sub>1</sub> incorporated substantial portions of Isaiah's writings into his personal record on his "small" plates (for example, Isaiah 48–49 = 1 Nephi 20–21; Isaiah 49:22–52:2 in Jacob's sermon as preserved in 2 Nephi 6–10; Isaiah 2–14 = 2 Nephi 12–24; Nephi's midrash of Isaiah 29 in 2 Nephi 27; and so forth). In an insightful study, John Gee and Matthew Roper explored how Nephi and the earliest Nephites would have, in Nephi's own words, "likened all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our

34. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 175.

35. Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 86.

36. Matthew 1:1; 1:20 (in reference to Joseph); 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30–31; 21:9, 15; 22:42. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Title 'Son of David' in Matthew's Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95, no. 4 (1976): 591–602.

profit and learning" (1 Ne. 19:23). As a major part of their study, they answer the question of how Nephi and his people might have "likened" the political situation in the Syro-Ephraimite crisis laid out in Isaiah 7 to their own circumstances. They write:

Apply [Isaiah 7] now to Nephi's day. Within forty years of Lehi's departure from Jerusalem (see 2 Nephi 5:34), perhaps after thirty years in the promised land (see 1 Nephi 17:4), Nephi notes that "we had already had wars [i.e., large-scale conflicts] and contentions with our brethren" (2 Nephi 5:34). In his ambition to gain power and assert his claims to rulership, Laman, leader of "the people who [are] now called Lamanites" (2 Nephi 5:14), has made war on another ruler of Israelite descent, Nephi and his people (see 2 Nephi 5:1–3, 14, 19, 34). Perhaps frightened by the superior numbers of their enemies, the people are counseled to trust in the Lord, since those who fight against Zion will end up licking the dust of the feet of the covenant people of the Lord (see 2 Nephi 6:13; 10:16). If there were others in the land, it would also help explain why many of Nephi's people had difficulty understanding Isaiah, although not all of them did (see 2 Nephi 25:1–6). Nephi's emphasis on the universal nature of God's love is even more meaningful if written and taught to a people grappling with issues of ethnic and social diversity. "And he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile" (2 Nephi 26:33). Nephites would understand Jews to be those who came out from Jerusalem, yet the additional reference to Gentiles and heathens would make sense to a Nephite only if there were others in the land.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, the Nephites may have "likened" Pekah, the king of Israel, to Laman, and others in the land (who allied themselves with Laman) to Rezin, while likening Nephi to the Davidic king. If Gee and Roper are correct, Nephi—though not of Davidic descent (as far as we know)—adopted it as a promise of protection for himself, as an Israelite ruler, and the kings that reigned after him (see Jacob 1:10–11). Nephi's adopted Immanuel doctrine would have found easy correlation with the "dynastic" promise to Lehi and Nephi (or "Lehitic Covenant")<sup>38</sup> that

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37. John Gee and Matthew Roper, "I Did Liken All Scriptures unto Us': Early Nephite Understandings of Isaiah and Implications for 'Others' in the Land," in *The Fulness of the Gospel: Foundational Teachings from the Book of Mormon*, ed. Camille Fronk Olson and others (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2003), 59–60.

38. On the designation "Lehitic Covenant," see Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology*, 2nd ed. (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious



finds thematic expression in Nephi's writings and later throughout the Book of Mormon: "Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land. But inasmuch as ye will not keep his commandments, ye shall be cut off from his presence" (for example, 2 Ne. 1:20).<sup>39</sup> Nephi's statement in 2 Nephi 5:11, "And **the Lord was with us and we did prosper** exceedingly," constitutes superb evidence that such was the case (compare further 2 Ne. 5:13).

That Nephi and his successors saw a messianic dimension in the Immanuel prophecy seems clear from the language in Nephi's report of his vision of the tree of life and Alma<sub>2</sub>'s later allusion to Isaiah 7:14. In describing the tree of life and the birth of the Son of God that he saw in vision, Nephi employs the language of Isaiah 7:14: "I beheld a virgin [(*hā*)'*almâ*], and she was exceeding fair and white" (1 Ne. 11:13). When Nephi's angelic guide asks what he sees, he responds: "A **virgin** [compare Heb. (*hā*)'*almâ*] most beautiful and fair above all other virgins" (1 Ne. 11:15). Nephi reports that his angelic guide subsequently identified the virgin thus: "And he said unto me: Behold, **the virgin** [Heb. *hā*'*almâ*] which thou seest is **the mother of God** [compare Heb. *'ēl*] **after the manner of the flesh**" (1 Ne. 11:18).

When Nephi sees the virgin's divine son, he reports it in the language of Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6: "And I looked and beheld the virgin [Heb. *hā*'*almâ*] again, bearing a **child** [Heb. *yeled*] in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even **the Eternal Father**" (1 Ne. 11:20–21). The angel's characterization of the Messiah as a "child" bearing the divine name-title "the Eternal Father" appears to come straight from Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God [*'ēl gibbôr*], **The everlasting Father** [*'ābi-'ad*], The Prince of Peace."<sup>40</sup>

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Scholarship, 2016), 84–90; Kimberly M. Berkey, "'Retain All Their Oaths': Lehitic Covenant and Secret Combinations in Alma 37," in *Give Ear to My Words: Text and Context of Alma 36–42 (The 48th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium)*, ed. Kerry M. Hull, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Hank R. Smith (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2019), 411–32.

39. See 1 Nephi 2:20; 2 Nephi 4:4; 5:11, 13; Jarom 1:9; Omni 1:6; Mosiah 1:7; 2:22, 31; 9:9; 10:5; 12:15; 21:16; 23:20; 27:7; Alma 1:31; 9:13; 36:1, 30; 37:13; 38:1; 48:15, 25; 50:18, 20; 62:48, 51; Helaman 3:20; 4:13, 15; 12:1–2; 3 Nephi 6:4; and 4 Nephi 1:17. Compare 1 Nephi 13:15, 20; Ether 6:28; 7:26; 9:16; and 10:16.

40. I have removed the comma from the KJV translation "Wonderful, Counsellor," which is not required by the Hebrew text.

Alma similarly relies on the language of Isaiah 7:14 when he describes Mary giving birth to Jesus in his speech to the people in the land/city of Gideon: "And behold, he shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem, which is the land of our forefathers, **she being a virgin** [Heb. *'almâ*], a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and **conceive** by the power of the Holy Ghost **and bring forth a son**, yea, even **the Son of God**" (Alma 7:10). Alma immediately juxtaposes his paraphrase of Isaiah 7:14 with a reference to<sup>41</sup> and exegesis of Isaiah 53:3–5 in Alma 7:11–13. Alma's use of Isaiah 7:14 and 53:3–5 together illustrates just how thoroughly enmeshed the prophecies of Isaiah were with Nephite Christology.

Moroni<sub>1</sub> cites to Lamanite leader Zerahemnah the Nephites' covenant faithfulness in connection with the Immanuel doctrine as the reason for their preservation in the face of overwhelming opposition:

But now ye behold that **the Lord is with us** [compare Heb. *'immānū yhw̄h*; compare Isaiah 7:14; 8:8; 8:10]. And ye behold that he hath delivered you into our hands. And now I would that ye should understand that this is done unto us because of our religion and **our faith** [compare Heb. *'ēmūnâ*] in Christ. And now ye see that ye cannot destroy this **our faith**. Now ye see that **this is the true faith of God**. Yea, ye see that God will support and keep and preserve us **so long as we are faithful unto him and unto our faith** and our religion. And **never will the Lord suffer that we shall be destroyed except we should fall into transgression and deny our faith**. (Alma 44:3–4)

We here recall Isaiah's words to Ahaz and the house of David in Isaiah 7:9: "If ye will not believe [*'im lō' ta'āmīnū*], surely ye shall not be established [*kī lō' tē'āmēnū*]." Moroni asserts that the Lord had been "with" the Nephites and had established or confirmed them because of their "faith" and "faithfulness" (Heb. *'ēmūnâ*) vis-à-vis the Lamanites and apostate Nephites like (possibly) Zerahemnah. Moroni's statement is particularly appropriate and ironic if he understood that the name Zerahemnah denoted "seed of faithfulness" (*zera'*, "seed" + a contracted form of *hā'ēmūnâ*<sup>42</sup> [compare shortened form, *'ēmunâ*],<sup>43</sup>

41. See Thomas A. Wayment, "The Hebrew Text of Alma 7:11," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 98–103.

42. For *'ēmūnâ* with definite article—*hā'ēmūnâ*—see Isaiah 11:5; Jeremiah 7:28 (KJV renders it "truth").

43. For the shortened form *'ēmunâ*, see 1 Samuel 26:23; 2 Kings 12:15; and Psalms 143:1. Compare the cognate noun *'ēmun* (as in *lō'-'ēmun*, "no faith," "no faithfulness") and Helaman's statement at the outset of his letter: "Behold, two thousand of the sons of those men which Ammon brought down out of the land of Nephi—now ye have known

“faithfulness”) or “[the] faithful descendant.” It is even more poignant and ironic if Zarahemnah himself was a descendant of Zarahemla and Muloch (see below). Mormon’s inclusion of this episode, including the repetition and wordplay involving *’ēmûnâ* and Zarahemnah, helps modern readers appreciate what Nephi’s adoption of the Immanuel doctrine in connection with the Lord’s covenant with Lehi meant over time in Lamanite-Nephite history.

The stripling sons of the converted Lamanites also seem to have drawn on early Nephite interpretations of Isaiah’s Immanuel doctrine, “likening” its promises of protection and preservation to themselves when they said to Helaman: “Father, behold, *our God is with us, and he will not suffer that we shall fall*” (Alma 56:46). This doctrine had been taught to them by their mothers: “Yea, they had been taught by their mothers that *if they did not doubt that God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt; our mothers knew*” (Alma 56:47–48; compare Alma 57:21). Unlike Ahaz and the house of David, these young men did “believe” or “have faith” in the Lord and his promises and were “established,” escaping without a single loss. Helaman reports the results of their faith in the Lord thus: “And now their preservation was astonishing to our whole army, yea, that they should be spared, while there was a thousand of our brethren which were slain. And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe, that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power” (Alma 57:26). It has been argued elsewhere that words translated “faith” and “believe” constitute wordplay on the name Laman in terms of traditional Nephite rhetoric regarding Laman and the Lamanites.<sup>44</sup> Helaman’s use of the verb “spare” also coincides with another important Book of Mormon theme: Zarahemla and the “seed of sparing.”

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that these were a descendant of Laman, which was the eldest son of our father Lehi—now I need not rehearse unto you concerning their traditions or their unbelief, for thou knowest concerning all these things.” See Matthew L. Bowen, “Laman and Nephi as Key-Words: An Etymological, Narratological, and Rhetorical Approach to Understanding Lamanites and Nephites as Religious, Political, and Cultural Descriptors,” FairMormon Conference, Provo, Utah, August 2019, <https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2019/laman-and-nephi-as-key-words>.

44. Bowen, “Laman and Nephi as Key-Words.”

## "Seed of Compassion" or "Seed of Sparing": Zarahemla and the Davidic Descendants of Zedekiah in the Land/City of Zarahemla

A small but not insignificant thread running through the Book of Mormon is the divine preservation of the Davidic seed in the New World and the merging of these descendants of David through Zedekiah and his son Muloch with the righteous Nephites who resettled in Zarahemla. That thread begins in Omni 1:12–19, where Amaleki recounts the exodus of Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and the righteous Nephites out of the land of Nephi and their discovery of the land, city, and people of Zarahemla, whose ruler's name was also Zarahemla.

The meaning of the name Zarahemla—"seed of compassion"<sup>45</sup> (Hebrew *zera* 'seed' + *hemlâ*, "compassion," "pity," "sparing")—fits hand in glove with the circumstances of the miraculous preservation of the Mulochites and the preservation of Zedekiah's posterity: "Behold, it came to pass that Mosiah discovered that the people of Zarahemla came out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon; and they journeyed in the wilderness and was brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters into the land where Mosiah discovered them" (Omni 1:15–16). The Deuteronomistic author of 2 Kings records:

And the city [Jerusalem] was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain. And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. So they took the king, and brought him

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45. John A. Tvedtnes, "I Have a Question: Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?," *Ensign* 16, no. 10 (October 1986): 65; John A. Tvedtnes, "What's in a Name? A Look at the Book of Mormon Onomasticon," review of *I Know Thee by Name: Hebrew Roots of Lehi-ite Non-Biblical Names in the Book of Mormon*, by Joseph R. Salonimer and Norrene V. Salonimer, *FARMS Review of Books* 8, no. 2 (1996): 41; see also Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6, no. 2 (1997): 259; and Joseph R. Salonimer and Norrene V. Salonimer, *I Know Thee by Name: Hebrew Roots of Lehi-ite Non-Biblical Names in the Book of Mormon* (Independence, Mo.: Salonimer, 1995), cited by Ricks and Tvedtnes, "Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Names," 259. The Salonimers, two Community of Christ scholars, arrived at the same conclusion, positing the meaning "child of grace, pity, or compassion." Tvedtnes, for his part, seems to have arrived at this etymology at least as early as 1983. Paul Hoskisson, personal communication with author, August 31, 2015.

up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. (2 Kgs. 25:4–7)

Mormon makes it clear that Zarahemla—Hebrew “seed of compassion”—was a direct descendant of Muloch, although he does not here disclose his precise identity: “Now there were not so many of the children of Nephi, or so many of those which were descendants of Nephi, as there were of the people of Zarahemla, which was a descendant [compare Heb. *zera*] of Muloch and those which came with him into the wilderness” (Mosiah 25:2; compare also the similar possible wordplay on “Zarahemla” in Mosiah 7:3).<sup>46</sup>

Mormon’s mention of Muloch in Mosiah 25:2 comes on the heels of several narratives that emphasize Zarahemla as a refuge for the descendants of those who had gone up to reinherit<sup>47</sup> the land of Nephi generations earlier (on the return of Limhi’s and Alma<sub>1</sub>’s peoples to Zarahemla, see Mosiah 22–24). Mormon states that Mosiah<sub>2</sub> “received” both the survivors of the people of Limhi and Alma’s people “with joy” in Zarahemla (Mosiah 22:14; 24:25) after their miraculous deliverances.

Later, Mormon revisits this theme when, following Ammon<sub>2</sub> and his brothers’ successful mission among the Lamanites, he states that “Ammon and his brethren” were “moved with compassion” for the converted Lamanites in the face of a determined effort to exterminate them and proposed to relocate their converts to Zarahemla (Alma 27:4–5). A generation later, the people of Ammon in Zarahemla reciprocally were “moved with compassion” for the Nephites (Alma 53:11–13).<sup>48</sup>

In Helaman 6:10, we learn for the first time that Muloch was the immediate son of Zedekiah. Mormon makes the connection explicit in a chiasmic text explaining the general geography in which Lehite history transpires:

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46. On the possible wordplay on Zarahemla in Mosiah 7:3, see Pedro Olavarria and David E. Bokovoy, “Zarahemla: Revisiting the ‘Seed of Compassion,’” *Insights: The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship* 30, no. 5 (2010): 2.

47. On the expedition to re-inherit the land of Nephi, see Amaleki’s comments in Omni 1:27–30 and Zeniff’s autobiography in Mosiah 9–10.

48. On the wordplay on Zarahemla evident in these narratologically bound episodes, see Matthew L. Bowen, “‘They Were Moved with Compassion’ (Alma 27:4; 53:13): Toponymic Wordplay on Zarahemla and Jershon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 233–53.

- A Now the land south  
 B was called Lehi;  
 C and the land north  
 D was called Muloch,  
 E which was after the son of Zedekiah.  
 E' For the Lord [yhwh]  
 D' did bring Muloch  
 C' into the land north  
 B' and Lehi  
 A' into the land south. (Helaman 6:10)<sup>49</sup>

Commenting on the structure of this text, John W. Welch notes: "The center of this chiasm involves two individual words. At the very apex, the words 'Zedekiah' and 'Lord' stand parallel to each other, which is intriguing since the Hebrew word for 'Lord' constitutes the theophoric suffix *-yah* at the end of the name 'Zedekiah.'"<sup>50</sup> Welch's point is that Mormon creates something of an onomastic wordplay involving the *-yāhū* element in Zedekiah (*šidqiyyāhū*) and *yhwh*—the divine name Yahweh or Jehovah.

Conceivably, Mormon's mention of "Muloch . . . the son of Zedekiah" and the "the Lord . . . bring[ing] Muloch into the land north" was motivated by, preparing for, and ultimately drawn from the account of Nephi<sub>2</sub>'s speech from his garden tower (Hel. 7:13–29), which he later includes. This mention especially anticipates the data of Helaman 8:21: "And now will you dispute that Jerusalem was not destroyed? Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Muloch? Yea, and do ye not behold that the seed of Zedekiah are with us and they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem?" The Mulochite identity as the "seed of Zedekiah" and thus the "seed royal" (*zera' hammamlākā* or *zera' hammēlūkā*,<sup>51</sup>

49. The chiasmic text is only part of a much larger chiasmic structure spanning Helaman 6:7–13. I have adapted it from the structure suggested by John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in Helaman 6:7–13," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, F.A.R.M.S. Updates (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 230–32. See also John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), chart 133.

50. Welch, "Chiasmus in Helaman 6:7–13," 232.

51. Compare editor Paul Y. Hoskisson's suggestion in *The Book of Mormon Onomasticon of the Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies*, s.v. "Zarahemla," <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/ZARAHEMLA>.

2 Kgs. 11:1; 25:25; Jer. 41:1; compare 2 Chron. 22:10)<sup>52</sup> that had been divinely preserved according to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants remained an important aspect of Nephite polity and identity.

### **“False Christs”: Trouble in Zarahemla and Benjamin’s (Re)establishment of His Father’s Dynasty**

From the beginning of Lehiite history, the right to rule among Lehi’s descendants was a complicated matter. As Noel Reynolds pointed out long ago, Nephi’s brass plates—including their quotations of Isaiah and the “Immanuel” prophecy—constituted something of a legitimating political document for Nephi’s right to rule,<sup>53</sup> among other things.

The Book of Mormon, as we have it, reveals very little about the kingship situation in the land of Nephi at the time of the exodus of Mosiah<sub>1</sub> and his followers from that land. Amaron, the son of Omni, reports that around 320 years after Lehi left Jerusalem “the more wicked part of the Nephites were destroyed” (Omni 1:5) and that “the Lord did visit them in great judgment” (Omni 1:7), but also that the Lord “did spare the righteous, that they should not perish, but did deliver them out of the hands of their enemies” (Omni 1:7). Writing sometime later in the city of Zarahemla, Amaleki, Amaron’s nephew, reports that Mosiah<sub>1</sub> had been “warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi—and as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord should also depart out of the land with him into the wilderness” (Omni 1:12). Amaleki never specifies whether Mosiah<sub>1</sub> was the regnant king in the land of Nephi at that time, though he may have been. It is also possible that Mosiah led the exodus in opposition to someone else who had ascended the throne. The fact that Mosiah<sub>1</sub> “was made king over the land of Zarahemla” (Omni 1:12) perhaps indicates that he had previously reigned as king in the land of Nephi. In any case, Mormon, describing circumstances near the end of the reign of Mosiah<sub>2</sub>, tells us that “the kingdom had been conferred upon none but those which were descendants of Nephi” (Mosiah 25:13), which suggests that Mosiah<sub>1</sub> was a royal descendant of Nephi.

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52. The preservation of the Davidic line, at times as a seemingly endangered remnant, constitutes an important theme of the Deuteronomistic History from 2 Samuel 12 until the last verses of the very last chapter of 2 Kings (2 Kgs. 25:25–30).

53. See Noel B. Reynolds, “The Political Dimension in Nephi’s Small Plates,” *BYU Studies* 27, no. 4 (1987): 15–37.



The Book of Mormon contains a single mention<sup>54</sup> of "false Christs" (W of M 1:15), which Mormon makes when he describes the stabilizing of King Benjamin's reign (W of M 1:12–Mosiah 1:1) sometime following the reign of Mosiah<sub>1</sub>, King Benjamin's father, who Amaleki tells us "was made king over the land of Zarahemla" at the time the Nephites and the Mulochites first united (Omni 1:12–19). It is hard to imagine that Mosiah<sub>1</sub>'s kingship was universally accepted by the people in Zarahemla. And ironically, the biblical texts that Mosiah<sub>1</sub> brought with him on the plates of brass would have potentially legitimated the kingship of Zarahemla and his descendants as descendants of David. Although Mormon never specifies precisely what he means by "false Christs," it is important to note that in the Hebrew Bible the kings of Israel and Judah were designated as the Lord's "anointed" (Hebrew *māšīah* = Greek *christos*).<sup>55</sup> Even after Saul had been rejected from dynastic rule (1 Sam. 13:13–14) and later from his kingship (1 Sam. 15), he still retained this title (see 1 Sam. 24:6; 26:9, 11, 16, 23).

### "The Seed of Zedekiah Are with Us"

For the first time, at least in what we still have of Mormon's abridgment of the large plates, Mormon mentions that Zarahemla and the people of Zarahemla descended from a man named Muloch, though he does not mention Muloch's importance: "Now there were not so many of the children of Nephi, or so many of those which were descendants of Nephi, as there were of the people of Zarahemla, which was a descendant of Muloch and those which came with him into the wilderness" (Mosiah 25:2). Although Muloch's identity is not yet made clear, the name itself—a formation from the Semitic/Hebrew root *m-l-k* ("reign," "to be king")<sup>56</sup>—hints at his royal, Davidic identity. We also learn here that the descendants of Muloch constituted the majority of the new "Nephite" population after the time of Mosiah<sub>1</sub>'s exodus to Zarahemla.

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54. In 2 Nephi 25:18, Nephi states, "For there should not any [messiah] come save it should be a false Messiah which should deceive the people. For there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets"—that is, Jesus Christ.

55. See, for example, 1 Samuel 12:3, 5; 24:6; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Samuel 22:51; Psalms 2:2; 18:50; 20:6; 28:8; 84:9; 89:38, 51; 132:10; and Habakkuk 3:13; compare 1 Samuel 2:10 and Lamentations 4:20.

56. See Hoskisson, *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. "Mulek," <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/MULEK>.

The next mention of Muloch, as noted earlier, definitively establishes the Davidic identity of Muloch as a son of Zedekiah: “Now the land south was called Lehi; and the land north was called Muloch, which was after the son of Zedekiah. For the Lord did bring Muloch into the land north and Lehi into the land south” (Hel. 6:10). By the time of Mosiah<sub>1</sub>, the Davidic descendants of Zedekiah in Zarahemla were “exceeding numerous” (Omni 1:17). By the time of Nephi<sub>2</sub>, intermarrying with the Nephites would have made these descendants even more numerous.

Mormon’s statement in Helaman 6:10 appreciably aids the reader’s grasp of the demographic dynamics of Nephi<sub>2</sub>’s speech. Mormon reports that Nephi gave the speech “upon a tower which was in the garden of Nephi, which was by the highway which led to the chief market which was in the city of Zarahemla” (Hel. 7:10). Nephi’s audience in Zarahemla included an increasingly mixed, if not a wholly integrated, group of Nephites and Mulochites.

As a lead-in to his prediction of the murder of the Nephites’ chief judge Seezoram and a first demonstration of his own ability to receive specific knowledge through divine revelation about the murder of the Nephites’ chief judge (see Hel. 8:11–28), Nephi<sub>2</sub> cites a lengthy list of prophetic witnesses of Jesus Christ beginning at Moses (vv. 11–13) and the evidence of the brazen serpent (vv. 14–15), then harking back to Abraham (vv. 17–19), then forward again to Zenos (v. 19). He then states, “And behold, also Zenoah and also Ezaiah and also Isaiah and Jeremiah, Jeremiah being that same prophet which testified of the destruction of Jerusalem—and now we know that Jerusalem was destroyed according to the words of Jeremiah—O then why not the Son of God come according to his prophecy?” (Hel. 8:20).

Verifying the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecies (Jer. 6:1–30; 26:7–9) regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, Nephi says, “And now will you dispute that Jerusalem was not destroyed? Will ye say that **the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Muloch?** Yea, and do ye not behold that **the seed of [zera<sup>ʿ</sup>] Zedekiah are with us** [Heb. *ʾimmānû*] and they were driven out of the land of Jerusalem?” (Hel. 8:21).

The phrase “the seed [zera<sup>ʿ</sup>] of Zedekiah are with us [*ʾimmānû*]” constitutes double wordplay involving both the names Zarahemla (“seed of compassion,” “seed of sparing”)<sup>57</sup> and Immanuel (“with us [is]

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57. Bowen, “They Were Moved with Compassion,” 234–35, 250. Nephi<sub>2</sub> had used a similar wordplay on “seed” and (implicitly) Zarahemla in Helaman 7:24.

God"). If the Nephites' language still consisted largely of Hebrew,<sup>58</sup> the Nephite and Mulochite inhabitants of Zarahemla would have appreciated the rhetorical force of both of these apparent onomastic allusions. Like the Syro-Ephraimite crisis of the eighth century BCE, the destruction of Jerusalem in 586/587 BCE constituted an existential threat to the house of David. The Davidic dynasty came to an end as a political institution with the capture of Zedekiah and the slaughter of his known sons (except for Muloch). For his part, Zedekiah's nephew and predecessor Jehoiachin (or Jeconiah) and the latter's Davidic offspring survived in Babylon in initially precarious, but eventually improving, circumstances (see 2 Kgs. 25:27–30).

Like the survival of Jehoiachin and his offspring in Babylon and the survival of Zedekiah's daughters elsewhere (see Jer. 41:10), the survival of Zedekiah's royal Davidic son Muloch among those who "were brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters, into the land where Mosiah discovered them" (Omni 1:16), represents a continuation of the promised protection of the house of David according to Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy and is consistent with the articulation of the Davidic covenant as an extension of the Abrahamic covenant in Jeremiah 33:22: "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant."

Nephi<sub>2</sub> further uses the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem (see, for example, Jer. 6:1–30; 26:7–9) as an analogy to argue the fulfillability of Jeremiah's and earlier prophets' prophecies concerning the coming of the Son of God. If the Lord had destroyed Jerusalem according to prophecy, which the presence of the "seed of Zedekiah . . . with us" more than proved, then the Son of God would come and eventually be "with" them.

Conceivably, Jeremiah's statement regarding "the Son of God com[ing], according to his prophecy," has reference to Jeremiah's prophecies in Jeremiah 23:5–6 and 33:15–17 that foretold the raising up of a "Branch" (*šemaḥ*)—that is, a Davidic scion or descendant who would "execute" the "judgment" and "justice"/"righteousness" (*šēdāqâ*) that previous Davidic kings had never fully established or had utterly failed to uphold. The symbolic name given to the Branch was "the Lord our

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58. In Mormon 9:33, Moroni indicates that the Nephite everyday language still largely consisted of Hebrew, albeit in altered form.

Righteousness” (*yhwh šidqēnû*)—a wordplay on the name Zedekiah (*šidqiyyāhû*). Jeremiah gave the branch prophecy (or prophecies) at a time when the Davidic monarchy ceased to exist as a political institution with Zedekiah’s capture and deportation to Babylon, the same time when Muloch and those with him escaped and came to the New World. For the scripturally literate in Nephi’s audience who could appreciate its significance,<sup>59</sup> Nephi’s reminder that the “seed of Zedekiah are with us” would have effectively recalled both the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14; 8:8, 10 and the “Branch” prophecy of Jeremiah 23:5–6; 33:15–17 and would have reminded those Nephite-Mulochites who heard the prophecy that the “Son of God” would in due course also be “with” them.

### **“He Is God; and He Is with Them” (Hel. 8:21b–23)**

After noting the “seed (*zera*)” of Zedekiah” who had been “driven out of Jerusalem” and miraculously spared and who dwelt, by then, in comparatively substantial numbers<sup>60</sup> in Zarahemla, Nephi<sub>2</sub> turns to earliest Lehiite history and the events that Nephi<sub>1</sub> chronicles in 1 Nephi 1:1–2:4 of Lehi being driven out of Jerusalem: “But behold, this is not all. Our father Lehi was driven out of Jerusalem because he testified of these things. Nephi also testified of these things, and also almost all of our fathers, even down to this time. Yea, they have testified of the coming of Christ and have looked forward and have rejoiced in his day, which is to come” (Hel. 8:21b–22).

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59. There remain open and irresolvable questions about the degree to which Nephi’s audience would have had access to the scriptures. It is plausible and even likely that the religious and judicial elite and other well-to-do individuals—and maybe more—would have had access to copies of scriptural texts. For example, Mormon mentions that “many” people at Ammonihah had copies of scriptural texts (see especially Alma 14:1, 8). If such was the case at Ammonihah, it would have been even more the case at Zarahemla, the Nephite religious capital during that time. There is also the question of language: were the writings on the brass plates written in Egyptian script using Egyptian language, in a type of Egyptian shorthand using Hebrew language, or in some combination of these? In any case, the meaning of the name Immanuel from Isaiah 7–8, like the name Zarahemla, would have been transparent to a Hebrew-speaking audience. The Nephites used Hebrew as a written—and probably spoken—language until the end of their existence, as Moroni indicates (see Morm. 9:33), albeit in altered form. All languages change over time. Amaleki mentions that the Nephite and Mulochite spoken languages had diverged considerably by the time of Mosiah<sub>2</sub> (see Omni 1:17–18). To exactly what degree Nephite Hebrew had changed from the Israelite and Judahite Hebrew of the eighth–seventh centuries BCE is presently unknowable. Nevertheless, it remains an important question to consider. I proceed here on that acknowledgment.

60. Compare Mosiah 25:2.

In 1 Nephi 1:19, Nephi makes it clear that Lehi "testified that the things which he saw and heard [in his vision], and also the things which he read in the book [that is, in the heavenly book that he was given to read], manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah and also the redemption of the world." Nephi further notes that it was specifically testimony regarding the coming of the Messiah that put his father's life in danger. Lehi's audience in Jerusalem had been content to mock him when he had "truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations" (1 Ne. 1:19). However, when he began to testify of the coming of a Messiah, "they also sought his life that they might take it away" (1 Ne. 1:20). Lehi's subsequent divine deliverance and preservation from his enemies at Jerusalem—and Nephi's own deliverance and preservation from his brothers—shapes the great thesis statement of Nephi's record: "I Nephi will shew unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all them whom he hath chosen **because of their faith** to make them mighty, even unto the power of deliverance" (1 Ne. 1:20). He may also have intended this thesis statement as an expression of his own adaptation of the Immanuel doctrine.

It is in the context of his own citation of the many earlier prophetic witnesses of Jesus Christ and the testimonies of Lehi, Nephi<sub>1</sub>, and their successor witnesses, including Moroni<sub>1</sub> and the 2,060 stripling warriors, that Nephi<sub>2</sub> testified to the people, "And behold, **he is God** [Heb. *hû' (hā)'ēlōhîm*]; **and he is with them** [*wēhû' 'immām*], and he did manifest himself unto them, that they were redeemed by him. And they gave unto him glory **because of that which is to come**" (Hel. 8:23).

Nephi<sub>2</sub>'s declaration "he is God; and he is with them" represents a Christological statement consistent with Nephi's vision of the tree of life and its meaning: "**The virgin** [*hā'almâ*] which thou seest is **the mother of God** after the manner of the flesh" (1 Ne. 11:18; compare 11:22–23). It is also consistent with a Christology expressed throughout the Book of Mormon that presents Christ as "the very Eternal Father" (Mosiah 16:15; see also Mosiah 15:4 and Alma 11:38–39). Jesus Christ would, in only a few years, be "with" his people in the flesh, as described in Matthew's gospel, but also with the Lamanites, Nephites, and Mulochites as the resurrected Lord (see 3 Ne. 11–26).

In Hebrew, the idea "he is God" is expressed with a verbless clause: *hû' hā'ēlōhîm* (for example, Deut. 4:35, 39; 7:9) or *hû' 'ēlōhîm* (for example, Josh. 2:11; Ps. 100:3).<sup>61</sup> On one level, the "us" expressed in *'immānû* from

61. Compare 1 Nephi 11:6 and Mosiah 27:31.

Isaiah 7:14 refers to the “house of David” to whom the Immanuel prophecy originally came. However, if “us” in Isaiah 7:14 can also be connected with the “us” of the divine council in Isaiah 6:8 (“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us [*lānû*]?”) and the “us” of Isaiah 9:6 (“For unto us [*lānû*] a child is born, unto us [*lānû*] a son is given”), then it is a broad enough “us” to include the prophets (compare the “noble and great ones” of Abr. 3:22–23). Nephi’s declaration firmly expands the application of the Immanuel prophecy far beyond its original, historical application to Ahaz, the house of David, and Judah and even beyond Nephi’s adaptive likening of its doctrine to himself and his successors or to the Mulochites later. Jesus Christ is the “God with” all of those who truly believe in him and demonstrate covenant faithfulness to his name. Nephi’s words also suggest an extension of the blessings of the Davidic covenant along the lines of Isaiah 55:3: “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” The Nephites, Lamanites, and Mulochites would all experience the extension of these “sure mercies” in the most sacred sense at the temple in Bountiful just a few years later.

### **“Ye Shall Have My Spirit to Be with You”: The Sacrament Prayers as an Expression of the Immanuel Doctrine**

When Jesus appeared to the Lamanites and Nephites—including Mulochites—at the temple in Bountiful (3 Ne. 11–26), he appeared to a people familiar with the Immanuel prophecy and doctrine. For this audience, “he is God; and he is with them” was a well-established Israelite, Davidic, and Lehite covenant concept. This favored group of Israelites would experience “God with us” beyond what many of Jesus’s disciples in Galilee and Judea experienced—even “God with” them in the flesh (we will return to the scenes in 3 Ne. 11–17 below).

The resurrected Jesus’s institution of the sacrament in 3 Nephi 18 with its accompanying promises of his continued divine presence “always . . . to be with them” stands as one of the most important earthly expressions of the Immanuel doctrine. The sacrament prayers as found today in D&C 20:77, 79 have been taken nearly verbatim from Moroni 4:3 and 5:2, respectively. In view of the foregoing discussion, it seems important to consider these prayers—two of the very few fixed prayers in Latter-day Saint liturgy—as expressions of the Immanuel doctrine. Here we will consider what they mean in terms of “God with us” in spirit and the more expansive Matthean notion of “God with us” in the flesh:

### Moroni 4:3

O God the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son and always remember him and keep his commandments which he hath given them, **that they may always have his Spirit to be with them.** Amen.

### Moroni 5:2

O God the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them, that they may witness unto thee, O God the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, **that they may have his Spirit to be with them.** Amen.

The sacrament prayers as translated in Moroni 4–5 originate in the words that the resurrected Jesus spoke to the Lamanites and Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, as recorded in 3 Nephi 18. As John W. Welch has noted, “The words in our sacrament prayers are a transformed version of Jesus’s first- and second-person language recast as a third-person text.”<sup>62</sup> The dependence of the prayer preserved in Moroni 4:3 on Jesus’s words in 3 Nephi 18:6–7 could not be clearer: “And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and gave it unto you. And this shall ye do in remembrance of **my body, which I have shewn unto you.** And it shall be a testimony unto the Father, that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me, **ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.**” The resurrected Jesus was “with them” in the flesh, promising them the presence of his Spirit to be “with them” until he would be with them again (see also Matt. 28:20).

As Welch has observed, “When we partake of the bread, we should remember that we eat not only in remembrance of the body that has been broken for us . . . [but] in remembrance of the physical, tangible body”<sup>63</sup>—that is, Christ had just “shewn” unto the people the marks that stood as irrefutable tokens, proofs, and memorials of his atoning sacrifice. Thus, we should not decouple the prayer on the bread in Moroni 4:3 and its source in Jesus’s words in 3 Nephi 18:6–7 from the tangible

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62. John W. Welch, in “3 Nephi Conference Panel Discussion,” in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye Strathearn (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2012), 381.

63. Welch, “3 Nephi Conference Panel Discussion,” 381–82.



experience detailed in 3 Nephi 11:15: “And it came to pass that the multitude went forth and thrust their hands into his side and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet. And this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands **and did know of a surety** and did bear record that it was he—of whom it was written by the prophets—that should come.” Paul connects the “sure mercies of David” mentioned by Isaiah (Isa. 55:3) with the resurrection and specifically the Resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:34). When the Lamanites and Nephites partook of the sacramental bread, they recalled the experience that gave them the “sure” knowledge that Jesus is the resurrected Messiah. With the resurrected Savior present with them, they had experienced “God with us” (Immanuel) to a degree that few mortals will ever experience. When we partake of the sacrament today, we are invited to “remember” Christ in the actualizing way that Oliver Cowdery was invited to envision him: “Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet” (D&C 6:37).

The prayer preserved in Moroni 5:2, in a similar way, originates in Jesus’s words to the Lamanites and Nephites (including those of Mulo-chite descent) in 3 Nephi 18:10–11:

And when the disciples had done this, Jesus saith unto them: Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments. And this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you. And this shall ye always do unto those who repent and are baptized in my name. And ye shall do it **in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you**, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. **And if ye do always remember me, ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.**

As Welch notes, “We celebrate the sacrament, not only of the Lord’s supper, but also of the Lord’s appearance in 3 Nephi.”<sup>64</sup> But partaking of the emblems of the sacrament, including the wine (or water) in remembrance of his blood also looks forward to an eschatological reality—“that day when I shall come and drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (JST Matt. 26:26 [in Matt. 26:29, footnote b]). The sacrament constitutes an oath (compare Latin *sacramentum*) that we acknowledge Jesus Christ as God the Eternal Father’s divine Son, and as we remember him, we receive the promise that we shall “always have his spirit to be

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64. Welch, “3 Nephi Conference Panel Discussion,” 381.

with [us]" (Moro. 4:3)—"He is God; and he is with [us]" (Hel. 8:23). Or, as Jesus said to the disciples in Galilee after his Resurrection, "I am with you alway[s]" (Matt. 28:20).

### **"They Pray unto Me Because I Am with Them" (3 Ne. 19:18–22)**

The day that followed Jesus's institution of the sacrament among the Lamanites and Nephites saw a much larger gathering to "the place [compare Hebrew *māqôm*] where Jesus should shew himself unto the multitude" (3 Ne. 19:3). "The place"—a Deuteronomic term for the temple<sup>65</sup>—was likely the temple in Bountiful or near thereto.

The ritual events of that day, which included baptism, also included a form of temple prayer, unique in scripture, in which the disciples prayed *directly to Jesus*: "And behold, they began to pray; and they did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God" (3 Ne. 19:18). After this prayer commenced, Jesus in turn prayed to the Father:

And it came to pass that Jesus departed out of the midst of them and went a little way off from them and bowed himself to the earth, and he saith: Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen. And it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world. Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words. Father, thou hast given them the Holy Ghost because they believe in me. And thou seest that they believe in me because thou hearest them, and they pray unto me; and **they pray unto me because I am with them.** (3 Ne. 19:19–22)

Like Jesus's institution of the sacrament in person the day before, this unique form of prayer to Jesus himself and his accompanying high-priestly intercessory prayer gave full earthly expression to the Isaianic Immanuel concept—God with us—introduced to "two thousand and

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65. See, for example, Deuteronomy 12:5: "the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name"; Deuteronomy 12:11: "a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there"; Deuteronomy 12:14: "in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee"; Deuteronomy 12:21: "the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to put his name there"; and Deuteronomy 12:26–27: "the place which the Lord shall choose: and thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings." In the Deuteronomic cult-centralization legislation, "the place" (*māqôm*) had direct reference to the central sanctuary—that is, the temple. When the tabernacle resided at Shiloh, it served as the central sanctuary. Later when the tabernacle came to Jerusalem and still later when Solomon's temple was built, these served as the central sanctuary.

five hundred souls” (3 Ne. 17:25) the previous day. As noted before, they had “g[one] forth one by one . . . and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands and did know of a surety . . . that it was he” (3 Ne. 11:15). Subsequently, they had been healed “every one,” and “they did all—both they which had been healed and they which were whole—bow down at his feet and did worship him. And as many as could come for the multitude did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears” (3 Ne. 17:9–10). Mormon records that those present later testified, “No tongue cannot speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak. And no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father” (3 Ne. 17:17). They had been overcome with joy such that they could not even stand (3 Ne. 17:18). They saw Jesus weep in their presence with a fullness of joy, even as “he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them” (3 Ne. 17:20–22), before the children were encircled by theophanic fire and angels ministering to them (3 Ne. 17:24). He had instituted the sacrament and the attendant promise of his Spirit to “always” be with them (3 Ne. 18:1–13; Moro. 4:3). He had gone away and had come again.

Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the disciples’ praying to Jesus “because I am with them” (3 Ne. 19:22) and his accompanying high-priestly prayer, Jesus’s second blessing and distribution of the sacrament that day, wherein he miraculously provided the bread and the wine (3 Ne. 20:2–9), must have been supremely meaningful to that much larger audience, and perhaps even more so to those who had experienced these events both days. In hindsight, we can better appreciate the beauty in Nephi<sub>2</sub>’s proleptic statement that past prophets and saints “gave unto [the Lord] glory because of that which is to come” (Hel. 8:23). Mormon understood that one of the most important things “to come” was the resurrected Jesus being “with” the sheep of his other fold. He records, “Now when the multitude had all eat and drank, behold, **they were filled with the Spirit.** And they did cry out with one voice and **gave glory to Jesus, whom they both saw and heard**” (3 Ne. 20:9).

We note that Mormon, the editor of this account, had witnessed the supreme divine withdrawal from his people: “And there were no gifts from the Lord. And the Holy Ghost did not come upon any because of their wickedness and unbelief” (Morm. 1:14; compare Alma 44:3–4); “the strength of the Lord was not with us. Yea, we were left to ourselves, that the Spirit of the Lord did not abide in us” (Morm. 2:26). But he also had “tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus” through the Lord’s

personal visitation to him (Morm. 1:15). Mormon was thus well situated to give his Latter-day audience a foretaste of "God with us," since the Lamanites and Nephites had experienced Christ, and to warn against falling from the high enlightenment from which his people had fallen.

If the scenes portrayed in 3 Nephi 11–26 offer a type and foreshadowing of events as they will transpire at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Latter-day Saints should cherish these scenes, the ordinance of the sacrament, and the gift of the Holy Ghost as our first received payment of an eternal inheritance (see again 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5 and Eph. 1:14). In a day to come, Jesus's disciples from all ages who have believed that "he is God; and he is with them" will appreciate the Immanuel concept on the highest and most expansive level in the celestial kingdom, "where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever" (D&C 76:92), when even the earth (and the saints) "shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father" (D&C 88:19).

## **Conclusion**

The "son" given the name Immanuel ("God with us") as a sign to Ahaz and the house of David as an immediate fulfillment of Isaiah's eighth-century-BCE prophecy is best understood as a child conceived and born within the royal household not long after Isaiah gave the prophecy. Biblical chronologies preclude Hezekiah as the fulfillment of the prophecy. Nevertheless, as a "son of David," the child "Immanuel" constituted a divine message that the house of David would not be exterminated, in spite of the sins and unfaithfulness of Ahaz and its later royal representatives. Later generations of Israelites found hope in the Immanuel prophecy as a promise of divine protection, preservation, and presence.

Matthew recognized the expansive theological possibilities of the "Immanuel" prophecy as applied to Jesus Christ—"God with us" in the flesh. This idea constitutes a sustained part of Matthew's Christology, which he connects with the church that Jesus sought to establish, with the sacrament, and with the Lord's promise to be "always . . . with" his disciples (Matt. 1:23; 17:17; 18:20; 26:29; 28:20; Moro. 4:3).

Nephi<sub>1</sub>, who described seeing Jesus's birth in language drawn from Isaiah 7:14 (1 Ne. 11:13, 15, 18, 20–21; compare Alma 7:10), also likened the Immanuel prophecy to himself and his fledgling people in the face of the immediate Lamanite threat. Later, Moroni<sub>1</sub> and the stripling sons of Ammon<sub>2</sub>'s Lamanite converts drew on and took hope in the Immanuel doctrine (see Alma 44:3–4; 56:46–48). The Immanuel prophecy took on increasing significance among the Nephites and Mulochites after the Nephite exodus to

Zarahemla and their unification with the Mulochites, among whom lived many descendants of a divinely protected and preserved son of Zedekiah, the last regnant king of Judah. The full power of Nephi<sub>2</sub>'s speech to the Nephites and Mulochites in the city of Zarahemla, including his statements "the seed of Zedekiah are with us" and "he is God; and he is with them" (Hel. 8:21, 23), cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing intertextual relationship with Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8, 10. In fact, Nephi's words in Helaman 8:13–26 offer a lens for viewing the Immanuel prophecy as it relates to the house of David, the Davidic Covenant, the house of Judah, and more broadly to the whole house of Israel.

Nephi<sub>2</sub>'s use of the Immanuel prophecy and his testimony of Jesus Christ to a Davidic audience came only decades before the Savior's advent as God in the flesh and his subsequent appearance as a resurrected being among the Lamanites and Nephites (including Mulochites) at the temple in Bountiful. Beyond his healings and teachings throughout his ministry at the temple in Bountiful (3 Ne. 11–26), Jesus's institution of the emblems of the sacrament among them in person, their prayers to him in person ("because I am with them," 3 Ne. 19:22), and his high-priestly prayers stand as the ultimate expression of the Immanuel doctrine, as Israelite-Lehite religious and cultural heritage. We appreciate anew the promise in the sacrament prayers that his disciples might "always have his spirit to be with" us (3 Ne. 18:7, 11; Moro. 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77, 79; compare Matt. 28:20) until his physical presence is eternally "with us."

To his disciples today, the sacrament should constitute an abiding reminder that the Lord wishes us to have his Spirit "always . . . to be with [us]" until that day. As the Lord stated to Joseph Smith, Orson Hyde, Luke S. Johnson, Lyman E. Johnson, William E. McLellin, and the early members of the restored Church: "Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for **I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you;** and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come" (D&C 68:6).

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Matthew L. Bowen is currently an associate professor of religious education at Brigham Young University–Hawaii. He earned MA and PhD degrees in Biblical studies from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He is husband to Suzanne Blattberg Bowen and father to Zachariah, Nathan, and Adele. They live in beautiful Lā'ie, Hawaii. He serves as a bishop in a married student ward. The author would like to thank Steve Harper, Roger Terry, Matt Christensen, and Taylor Crofts.