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**THE**  
INFINITE  
FALL

A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH  
TO THE SECOND  
PILLAR OF ETERNITY

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## CHAPTER 1

# WHY IS THE FALL INFINITE?

**I**n his 1981 BYU speech, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, said, “The three greatest events that have ever occurred in all eternity . . . the three pillars of eternity . . . the creation, the fall, and the atonement [are eternally] interwoven to form one grand plan of salvation.”<sup>1</sup> President Russell M. Nelson has stated, “Before one can comprehend the *atonement* of Christ, one must first understand the *fall* of Adam.”<sup>2</sup> The Fall, then, being one of the three pillars of eternity, is, in itself, eternal and infinite.

The concept of an infinite atonement and, by extension, an infinite fall, means that neither the Fall nor the Atonement is limited in space or time. Of course we know that the Atonement occurred over a three-day period a little less than two thousand years ago (April 4–6, around 33 AD). Although the Atonement itself occurred at a specific, *finite* date, its effect is infinite—being both retroactive as well as proactive. We also believe that the Fall occurred some six thousand years ago—again, at a specific, *finite* date. Nonetheless, although the date of the Fall is finite, if the influence of the Atonement is infinite, by logical extension, the infinite fall must also be unconfined by space and time—therefore, being infinite, it must be retroactive as well as proactive.

If time is viewed only mathematically as an infinitely long line, any division of that line, such as one’s lifetime, is meaningless ( $\infty/x$  is undefined). But with God, time is not an infinitely long line; *it doesn’t exist at all*. We are told in the

scriptures that “time only is measured unto men.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, we are told that there was a “beginning of time”<sup>4</sup> and that there is a “time of the end.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, there is a beginning and an end to earth’s existence and our sojourn here, which are measured by time. Before this time and after this time, there is no time in the infinite perspective.

To us mortals who exist during that temporal interval between the beginning of time and the end of time, the events occurring during this finite interlude are real and meaningful. The covenants we make and the ordinances we perform here, although finite in occurrence, are infinite in effect. For example, our own baptisms and sealings are proactive into the infinite future. But our baptisms and sealings for our deceased family members are retroactive to include them in that infinite future. Likewise, Christ’s Atonement was both proactive for those living and yet to be born as well as retroactive for those who had died before His resurrection. In the same manner, the Fall not only affected those born after Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden, but also the millions of people who had lived before Adam and Eve were placed into the Garden. To God, and to His children, the Fall was no more constrained in its infinite nature than was the Atonement. The infinite nature of the Fall was possible because each person born on this earth, no matter when, attended the premortal, infinite grand council in heaven where the entire plan of happiness, including the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement, were presented and accepted.

We are told that for God “all things are present before mine eyes”<sup>6</sup> and that God “is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him. For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.”<sup>7</sup>

In his book *The Infinite Atonement*, Elder Tad Callister said, “The phrase ‘infinite atonement’ or ‘infinite sacrifice’ may refer to an atonement or sacrifice by a God, a being who is infinite in knowledge, power, and glory. . . . Accordingly, the Atonement is ‘infinite’ because its source is ‘infinite.’”<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, it may also be said that the phrase “infinite fall” refers to a fall

orchestrated by a God, a being who is infinite in knowledge, power, and glory. Accordingly, the Fall is “infinite” because it had its source in the “infinite.”

## NOTES

1. Bruce R. McConkie, BYU Speeches, Feb. 17, 1981.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Standards of the Lord’s Standard-Bearers,” *Ensign*, 5–6; italics in original.
3. Alma 40:8
4. Abraham 1:3
5. Jacob 5:62; Daniel 12:9
6. Doctrine and Covenants 38:1–3
7. 1 Nephi 10:18–19
8. Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000).

## CHAPTER 2

# THE GREAT PLAN OF HAPPINESS

**I**n the April 2017 general conference, Elder Weatherford T. Clayton, of the Seventy, said, The journey our Father prepared for us is called the plan of salvation or the plan of happiness.<sup>1</sup> In a grand premortal council, our Father told us about His plan.<sup>2</sup> When we understood it, we were so happy that we shouted for joy, and “the morning stars sang together.”<sup>3</sup> That plan is built upon three grand pillars: the pillars of eternity.<sup>2</sup> The first pillar is the Creation of the earth, the setting for our mortal journey.<sup>4, 5</sup>

The second pillar is the Fall of our first earthly parents, Adam and Eve. Because of the Fall, some marvelous things were given to us. We were able to be born and receive a physical body.”<sup>6</sup>

Knowing that we would not always choose well—or in other words, sin—Father gave us the third pillar: the Savior Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Through His suffering, Christ paid the price for both physical death and sin.<sup>5</sup>

Most members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are quite familiar with this third part of the story of the grand council. We are told in Abraham, “And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.”<sup>7</sup>

Once God had announced that He would send His Beloved and Chosen

Firstborn to be His Only Begotten Beloved Son, we each had the choice to accept or reject the plan. But in order for this third part of the plan, this third pillar, to make any sense, we were also told of and accepted the other two parts of the plan. The scriptures are clear that we were informed of the first pillar, the Creation: “And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”<sup>8</sup>

However, the scriptures describing the premortal world appear to be mute concerning the second pillar, the Fall. Nonetheless, in accepting the great plan of salvation, we all must have accepted Adam’s part in the plan as well as Christ’s part. In a sermon given in Washington, DC, on February 5, 1840, as recorded by Matthew Davis, a New York City newspaper correspondent, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “He [God] reigns over all things in heaven and on earth. . . . He foreordained the fall of man, but all-merciful as He is, He foreordained at the same time a plan of redemption for all mankind.”<sup>9</sup> We are told that Adam was “called and prepared from the foundation of the world.”<sup>10</sup> Without a fall there was no need of a redemption. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”<sup>11</sup> We are all partakers of the “flesh and blood” given us by Adam,<sup>12</sup> just as we are all partakers of Christ’s redemption.<sup>13</sup> Paul stated in his letter to the Romans,

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: . . . Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by obedience of one shall many be made righteous.<sup>14</sup>

Jacob described the infinite nature of the Atonement: For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord. Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore,

the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration.<sup>15</sup>

Jacob stated that first, “death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator.” Second, “the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall.” Third, the Atonement “must needs be an infinite atonement.” Had it not been infinite, “the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration.” Furthermore, “the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel . . . and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect.”<sup>16</sup> In the previous two paragraphs, the parallel between the Fall and the Atonement has been emphasized in the scriptures: “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”<sup>11</sup> Jacob pointed out that the Atonement was an infinite atonement affecting ALL men. He also stated that the Fall passed upon ALL men.<sup>14</sup> The Fall is an infinite fall, for “the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an *endless duration*.”<sup>15</sup>

Jacob stated that as a result of the Fall, we are all “cut off from the presence of the Lord.”<sup>15</sup> As each child leaves the premortal state to come to earth, he or she is cut off from the presence of the Lord at that point. In order for God’s justice to be a righteous justice, that decision to leave God’s presence must be based on our own agency. We cannot be forced from God’s presence; we must leave of our own will. Furthermore, by the same reasoning, we must have accepted the mechanism by which our separation from God came about (the Fall). Without our agreement to the Fall, we would have become partakers of an unrighteous judgement against our agency.

We are well aware that the Atonement and Resurrection did not just affect those born after Christ’s death and resurrection. At the time of Christ’s resurrection, we are told that “the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Christ’s resurrection was *infinite* in affecting ALL humans, even affecting those humans born before Him. Therefore, those who lived and died many generations before Christ, as well as those who have lived for generations after the Atonement, agreed in the grand premortal council to the *infinite Atonement*.

Within infinity, time does not exist. We are told in the scriptures that “time only is measured unto men.”<sup>18</sup> Modern science is on the same page with the scriptures. As part of quantum mechanics, Albert Einstein demonstrated that time is not absolute but relative. He stated, “Time is simply a human construct and does not even exist outside our minds.”<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, we are told that there was a “beginning of time.”<sup>20</sup> So the council in heaven transpired during that infinite period *before* the beginning of time. Therefore, as with the infinite atonement, the infinite fall was timeless. Therefore, from an infinite fall perspective, Adam and Eve did not have to be temporally the first people on earth for their fall to be valid and affect ALL people born on earth—as we ALL agreed to be partakers in the Fall while we were yet residing in an infinite, immortal state.

We are told in the scriptures “that this is the man who receiveth salvation, through the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were since the fall of Adam, or who are, or who ever shall be, even unto the end of the world.”<sup>21</sup> We are also informed that death fulfilled “the merciful plan of the great Creator.”<sup>22</sup>

Just as Christ was the first fruits and was chosen in the great council in heaven before the foundations of the world, so too was Adam chosen in the same council as the first man. We don't seem to have much trouble understanding that the term “first fruits” is a metaphor not to be taken literally, but the term “first man” apparently has caused a rift between science and religion for a long time. Perhaps the name “first man” in the scriptures is intended as a title rather than a statement of his position in the temporal line of humanity. We commonly use the term “first” as a title: “First Presidency,” “first knight,” the greatest knight at the time; “first boy,” the head student at a school; “first lieutenant,” the senior lieutenant; “First Lady,” the wife of the president. We understand perfectly well that those titles are not intended to have any chronological intent. Likewise, when Adam was chosen as the “first man,” we were in a grand council in an *immortal, timeless* state. Adam represents ALL humanity in the Fall. In order for us to be tested it was necessary for us to leave God's presence—thus the Fall—and then return to His presence—thus the Atonement. We left the presence of God when we came to earth, and our objective in life is to return to God's presence. “Yea,

behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death—that spiritual death; for all mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual. But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord.”<sup>23</sup>

We are told in Mosiah, “For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned. And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins.”<sup>24</sup> We know that this blessing extends to millions of people born before and after the time of Jesus Christ, many of whom have never even heard His name. It is also reasonable to assume that such blessings also extend to those born before Adam—who never even heard *his* name during their mortality.

We all accepted the great plan of happiness in the premortal world, both the part Jesus Christ was to play in the Atonement, which is well documented in the scriptures, and the part Adam was to play in the Fall, which is implied in the scriptures and addressed by modern prophets.<sup>25</sup> Did it make any difference when these two eternal events actually occurred? We know that the Atonement affected people who lived before Christ as well as those who lived after Him. The presence of people on the earth before Christ’s birth is indisputable. Adam’s place in the earth’s chronology is a different matter. For millennia, the descendants of the Abrahamic covenant—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—have believed that *all* human beings descended from Adam and were born *after* the Fall, only some six thousand years ago. The presence of any humans on earth before Adam has been flatly denied by the Abrahamic religions until very recent times.

The concept that Earth’s entire history spanned only six thousand years was simply taken for granted and not even questioned until about two hundred years ago. Furthermore, the concept of three eternal pillars, including the infinite fall, were not explicitly part of our, or anyone’s, theology until about forty years ago.<sup>26</sup> Only very recently have the full eternal implications of the

eternal fall been addressed by our living prophets.<sup>25</sup>

In 1830 to 1833, Charles Lyell published his multi-volume *Principles of Geology*,<sup>27</sup> which demonstrated that the earth was much older than anyone had previously suspected. DNA analysis suggests that the first anatomically modern human, *Homo sapiens*, emerged as a separate species some 315,000 years ago.<sup>28</sup> Fossil remains and stone tools from *Homo sapiens* living 300,000 years ago were discovered in 2017 at Jebel Irhoud, Morocco.<sup>27</sup> The stunning cave paintings in France, such as those of the Lascaux Cave complex, were discovered in 1940, providing indisputable evidence that artistic humans lived on earth at least 20,000 years before Adam and Eve.<sup>29</sup> Breathtaking paintings in Chauvet Cave,<sup>30</sup> dating from around 30,000 to 35,000 years ago, discovered in 1994, didn't have to be dated by their artists—they were dated by time itself. More than eighty separate radio carbon studies have been conducted from torch marks on the ceiling, from the paintings themselves, and from charcoal and animal bones on the cave floor.<sup>31</sup>

For God, there is no temporal difference between the finite, mortal world and the infinite spirit world. The Fall, therefore, applies to the world of spirits as well as the world of mortals. It matters not at all when, in the course of earth's history, Adam came to earth. With God, there is no time. All humans are partakers of the Fall just as much as we are partakers of the Atonement, because we accepted both in the grand council in heaven before the foundations of the earth were ever laid and before the beginning of time, “as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.”<sup>32</sup>

Enos has told us,

And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed. And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away. And I said: Lord, how is it done? And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.<sup>33</sup>

God did not say to Enos, “Thy sins *will be* forgiven thee *after* Christ has paid the price.” He said, “Thy sins *are* forgiven thee.” He said, “Go to, thy faith *hath* made thee whole.” The Atonement would not occur for another 450 years, yet to God, it was as if it had already occurred. We might also consider that the

artists who decorated the Chauvet Cave and the Lascaux Cave complex, over 20,000 years before Adam and Eve, were partakers of the Fall *as if it had already occurred*.

If, according to Albert Einstein, the “distinction between past, present, and future is only an illusion,”<sup>19</sup> then the concept that Adam was chronologically the “first man,” who lived some 6,000 years ago, before any other human being, or even animals, for that matter, is also an illusion. If we simply understand that “first man” is a title, a well-deserved title for Adam, then most of the artificial controversy that has existed for years between science and religion simply vanishes. The revelation that time is an illusion does not mean that Adam was mythical or that the Fall was irrelevant. Indeed I agree with Elder Bruce R. McConkie<sup>26</sup> that the Fall of Adam is one of the three pillars of our faith, one of the three most important events in all of human history, upon which the gospel of Jesus Christ is founded.

In the priesthood session of the April 2016 general conference, President Henry B. Eyring, of the First Presidency, stated, Before we were born we lived in a family with our exalted and eternal Heavenly Father. He ordained a plan [in the grand council] that enables us to advance and progress to become like him. . . . The purpose of the plan was to allow us the privilege of living forever as our Heavenly Father lives. This gospel plan offered us a life of mortality in which we would be tested [the Fall]. A promise was given, that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, if we obey the laws and priesthood ordinances of the Gospel, we would have eternal life, the greatest of all His gifts.<sup>34</sup>

We all were foreordained before we came to earth that we would accept Jesus Christ as our Savior.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.<sup>35</sup>

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.<sup>36</sup>

All of us who hold the priesthood and/or hold specific callings in the Church were foreordained to those callings as well before we came to earth.

The following scriptures explain this concept: And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son . . . being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works.<sup>37</sup>

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.<sup>38</sup>

And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.<sup>39</sup>

We apparently all attended the grand council, and two-thirds of us, the host of heaven, marveled at the great plan of our God<sup>40</sup> and shouted for joy at its prospect.<sup>41</sup> At that council, Satan, who was from the beginning, “came before . . . [God], saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.”<sup>42</sup> Then God’s “Beloved, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.”<sup>43</sup>

Abraham gave a somewhat more detailed, more poetic account of the grand council: And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever. And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.<sup>44</sup>

Satan, in his anger, initiated a war in heaven during which he drew away one-third of heaven’s host. The casting out of Satan and his host is poetically

described in the book of Revelation: “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. . . . And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.”<sup>45</sup> The story is also told in modern revelation: “The devil . . . rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency.”<sup>46</sup>

It may be that, in some way through being cast out of heaven, Satan didn’t fully understand the great plan of happiness or Adam and Eve’s part in it, for we read in Moses, “And Satan put it into the heart of the serpent, (for he had drawn away many after him,) and he sought also to beguile Eve, for he knew not the mind of God, wherefore he sought to destroy the world.”<sup>47</sup>

Satan may have been surprised by the Fall and its consequences, but God and Christ certainly were not. Many Christians seem to believe that God was taken by surprise by Adam’s disobedience in the Garden of Eden and had to *then* devise a plan to save us. Such belief flies in the face of the notion that God is omniscient. Not only was Adam and Eve’s behavior in the Garden not surprising to God, but it was also part of the great plan, as presented to us in the grand council. Lehi, in his blessing to Jacob, taught, If Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.<sup>48</sup>

As will be discussed in detail in a later chapter, the “all things” and “they” stated in this scripture must refer specifically to Adam and Eve and their condition in the Garden before the Fall—for they were the only “things” that could know sin.

## NOTES

1. Alma 42:8
2. Abraham 3:24–28

3. Job 38:7
4. 3 Nephi 9:15
5. Weatherford T. Clayton, “Our Father’s Glorious Plan,” April 2017 general conference.
6. 2 Nephi 2:22–25
7. Abraham 3:27–28
8. Abraham 3:24–25
9. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 394–395; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 1, The Standard of Truth: 1815–1846, 411, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018. See also Mathew L. Davis to Mrs. Matthew [Mary] L. Davis, Feb. 6, 1840, Church History Library.
10. Alma 13:3
11. 1 Corinthians 15:22
12. Hebrews 2:14
13. Hebrews 3:14
14. Romans 5:12–19
15. 2 Nephi 9:6–7; italics added. 2 Nephi 9:12–13
17. Matthew 27: 52
18. Alma 40:8
19. *The New Quotable Einstein*, Alice Calaprice, ed. (Princeton University Press, 2005).
20. Abraham 1:3
21. Mosiah 4:7; see also Alma 12:33 and 22:13
22. 2 Nephi 9:6
23. Helaman 14:16–17
24. Mosiah 3:11, 16
25. Russell M. Nelson, “Standards of the Lord’s Standard-Bearers,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1991, 5–6; italics in original.
26. Bruce R. McConkie, BYU Speeches, Feb 17, 1981.
27. Roy S. Porter, “Charles Lyell and the Principles of the History of Geology,” *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 1976, 32:91–103.
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29. Gergory Curtis, *The Cave Painters: Probing the Mysteries of the World's First Artists*, (New York, Knopf, 2006).
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31. Zach Zorich, “A Chauvet Primer,” *Archaeology*, 64:39, March–April 2011.
32. 1 Nephi 10:18–19
33. Enos 1:5–8
34. Henry B. Eyring, “Eternal Families,” April 2016 general conference.
35. Romans 8:28–30
36. Ephesians 1:4
37. Alma 13:3
38. Jeremiah 1:5
39. Abraham 3:22
40. 2 Nephi 9:13
41. Job 38:7
42. Moses 4:1
43. Moses 4:2

44. Abraham 3:24–28
45. Revelation 12:7 and 12:4
46. Doctrine and Covenants 29:36
47. Moses 4:6
48. 2 Nephi 2:22–25

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