



BOOK OF MORMON

STUDENT MANUAL RELIGION 121 AND 122

Book of Mormon Student Manual

Religion 121 and 122

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Preface

Why a Student Manual?

The Book of Mormon is one of the easiest of the standard works to read and understand. Even so, the historical narratives, doctrinal expositions, and geographical relationships occasionally become hard to follow. The purpose of this student manual is to provide the companionship of experienced guides as you travel. These guides are trusted and inspired leaders of the Church and devoted students to the Book of Mormon. They will give you insights to broaden your understanding of the Book of Mormon and its more difficult terms and passages.

Study the Book of Mormon to Feel Its Power and Know Its Divinity

Parley P. Pratt spoke of the Book of Mormon as the principal means in directing the entire course of his life. In describing his first reading of the book he said:

“I opened it with eagerness, and read its title page. I then read the testimony of several witnesses in relation to the manner of its being found and translated. After this I commenced its contents by course. I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when the night came, for I preferred reading to sleep.

“As I read, the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew and comprehended that the book was true” (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 20).

Elder Spencer W. Kimball had a similar experience and spoke of his “adventure” with the Book of Mormon:

“May I tell you of a great adventure? As I traveled to a weekend assignment, I took with me an unusual book which was my constant companion. I could lay it down only to sleep, eat, and change trains. It fascinated me, captivated me, and held me spellbound with its irresistible charm and engaging interest. I have read it many times.

“As I finished it, I closed the book and sat back, absorbed as I relived its contents. Its pages held me, bound me, and my eyes were riveted to them. I knew the book was factual, but as has been said, ‘Truth is stranger than fiction.’ . . .

“I found in it life at its best and at its worst, in ever-changing patterns. I hardly recovered from one great crisis until another engulfed me. . . .

“This dramatic story is one of the greatest ever played by man. . . .

“Its story has a vital message to all people. . . .

“Archaeologists may be excited as they read of ruins of ancient cities, highways, and buildings. . . .

“Journalists will find in this book crisis after crisis, presenting rich material for limitless climactic stories. . . .

“This unparalleled book should intrigue navigators. . . .

“The student of economics will find in this unusual book the disintegration of nations through pride, soft living, and luxuries, terminating finally in hunger and fetters. . . .

“The astronomer and geologist here may see signs in the heavens and new stars come into focus, three days without sun . . . nights without darkness . . . and a vapor of darkness so impenetrable that no glimmer, nor candles, nor torches, nor fire could give any light. . . .

“Engineers will learn . . . that . . . centuries ago, men erected buildings, temples, and highways with cement. . . .

“The psychologists may find studies in human behavior and the workings of the human mind and the rationalizing processes where men convince themselves that ‘good is bad, and that bad is good.’ . . .

“The educator will find treasures of literature and poetry. . . .

“This comprehensive book should be studied by politicians, government leaders, kings, presidents, and premiers to see the rise and fall of empires, and the difference between statesmanship and demagoguery. . . .

“Scientists will read of unusual instruments never patented or remade or duplicated, of elements which, without recharging, illuminate dark spaces indefinitely. . . .

“Military men may learn much in strategy, intrigue, in movements, in morale. . . .

“But after all, it is not the book’s dramatic crises, its history, its narrative that are so important, but its power to transform men into Christlike beings worthy of exaltation.

“It is the word of God. It is a powerful second witness of Christ. And, certainly, all true believers who love the Redeemer will welcome additional evidence of his divinity. . . .

“My beloved friends, I give to you the Book of Mormon. May you read it prayerfully, study it carefully, and receive for yourselves the testimony of its divinity” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1963, pp. 62–65, 67–68).

Chapter 1

Introductory Lesson

Introduction

The introductory pages to the Book of Mormon contain the following important documents: opening page, title page, Introduction, the Testimony of Three Witnesses, the Testimony of Eight Witnesses, Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and a Brief Explanation about the Book of Mormon.

Notes and Commentary

Opening Page

An Official Announcement

In the October 1982 general conference, Elder Boyd K. Packer announced: “You should know also that by recent decision of the Brethren the Book of Mormon will henceforth bear the title ‘The Book of Mormon,’ with the subtitle ‘Another Testament of Jesus Christ.’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 53).

President Ezra Taft Benson gave his testimony and encouragement for all to read the Book of Mormon:

“We invite all men everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, another testament of Jesus Christ.

“The Bible sits on the pulpit of hundreds of different religious sects. The Book of Mormon, the record of Joseph, verifies and clarifies the Bible. It removes stumbling blocks, it restores many plain and precious things. We testify that when used together, the Bible and the Book of Mormon confound false doctrines, lay down contentions, and establish peace. (See 2 Nephi 3:12.)

“We do not have to prove the Book of Mormon is true. The book is its own proof. All we need to do is read it and declare it! The Book of Mormon is not on trial—the people of the world, including the members of the Church, are on trial as to what they will do with this second witness for Christ” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, p. 7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, p. 8).

Two years later President Benson again emphasized the importance of the Book of Mormon and warned that the members of the Church were under condemnation because they were neglecting the Book of Mormon:

“‘And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon’ (D&C 84:54–57).

“Has the fact that we have had the Book of Mormon with us for over a century and a half made it seem less significant to us today? Do we remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon? In the Bible we have the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word *testament* is the English rendering of a Greek word that can also be translated as *covenant*. Is this what the Lord meant when He called the Book of Mormon the “new covenant”? It is indeed another testament or witness of Jesus. This is one of the reasons why we have recently added the words ‘Another Testament of Jesus Christ’ to the title of the Book of Mormon” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, p. 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 4).

Title Page

Author of the Title Page

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “The title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates” (*History of the Church*, 1:71). Since it was the last leaf, or page, of the record, and the title page says the Book of Mormon was “sealed by the hand of Moroni,” it is believed that the title page was written by Moroni.

“By Way of the Gentile”

“Joseph Smith (through whom the Book of Mormon was revealed) was of the Tribe of Ephraim. At the same time the Prophet was of the Gentiles, meaning that he was a citizen of a Gentile Nation” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 311).

The Purpose of the Book of Mormon

“What is the major purpose of the Book of Mormon? To bring men to Christ and to be reconciled to him, and then to join his church—in that order. (See 2 Nephi 25:23; D&C 20:11–14, 35–37.)” (Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, p. 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, p. 6).

Introduction

The Keystone of Our Religion

Joseph Smith said, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (*History of the Church*, 4:461; see also President Benson’s talk in appendix A).

“The Prophet’s expression that ‘the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion’ means precisely what it says. The keystone is the central stone in the top of the arch. If that stone is removed, then the arch crumbles, which, in effect, means that Mormonism so-called—which actually is the gospel of Christ, restored anew in this day—stands or falls with the truth or the falsity of the Book of Mormon. . . .

“The Book of Mormon—which has come forth to prove that God inspires men and calls them to his holy work in this age and generation—establishes the verity of these great truths which comprise the message of the restoration. If the Book of Mormon is true, our message to the world is truth; the truth of this message is established in and through this book. . . .

“The Book of Mormon stands as a witness of the divine Sonship of Christ; it has come forth for ‘. . . the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the *Eternal God*, manifesting himself unto all nations— . . .’ (Preface to the Book of Mormon.)

“This book also is a witness of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of the divinity of the Church set up under his instrumentality. It establishes and proves to the world that Joseph Smith is a prophet, for he received the book from a resurrected personage and translated it by the gift and power of God. And since the Book of Mormon came by revelation, which included the ministering of angels, then obviously Joseph Smith also received other revelations and was ministered to by other heavenly beings. Among those revelations was the command to organize the Church. The Church is thus the one true Church because it was set up by a prophet acting under command of God. Thus the truth of the message of the restoration is established in and through and by means of the Book of Mormon” (Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, Apr. 1961, pp. 39–40).

The Book of Mormon Is for Our Day

“The Book of Mormon was written for us today. God is the author of the book. It is a record of a fallen people, compiled by inspired men for our blessing

today. Those people never had the book—it was meant for us. Mormon, the ancient prophet after whom the book is named, abridged centuries of records. God, who knows the end from the beginning, told him what to include in his abridgment that we would need for our day” (Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, p. 94; or *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 63).

Church Members Must Read the Book of Mormon

President Joseph Fielding Smith spoke of the importance of seriously studying the Book of Mormon:

“It seems to me that any member of this Church would never be satisfied until he or she had read the Book of Mormon time and time again, and thoroughly considered it so that he or she could bear witness that it is in very deed a record with the inspiration of the Almighty upon it, and that its history is true. . . .

“. . . No member of this Church can stand approved in the presence of God who has not seriously and carefully read the Book of Mormon” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1961, p. 18).

President Ezra Taft Benson indicated that an individual’s spirit and conviction to the gospel are greatly affected by their knowledge of the Book of Mormon:

“Members of the Church everywhere should know the Book of Mormon better than any other book. Not only should we know what history and faith-promoting stories it contains, but we should understand its teachings. . . .

“I have noted within the Church the difference in discernment, in insight, conviction, and spirit between those who know and love the Book of Mormon and those who do not. That book is a great sifter” (“Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” *New Era*, May 1975, p. 19).

The Testimonies of Witnesses

The Lord’s Law of Witnesses

“Whenever the Lord has established a dispensation by revealing his gospel and by conferring priesthood and keys upon men, he has acted in accordance with the *law of witnesses* which he himself ordained. This law is: ‘In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.’ (2 Cor. 13:1; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:15–16; John 8:12–29.)

“Never does one man stand alone in establishing a new dispensation of revealed truth, or in carrying the burden of such a message and warning to the world. In

every dispensation, from Adam to the present, two or more witnesses have always joined their testimonies, thus leaving their hearers without excuse in the day of judgment should the testimony be rejected” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 436).

The Testimony of Twelve Witnesses

President Heber J. Grant emphasized the importance of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon:

“I do not believe that in any court of justice in the world if a man was being tried for murder and twelve reputable citizens testified of their knowledge of the circumstances leading to the murder, and there was no one who could testify against what they said, there would be a failure to convict the man. We have the testimony of Joseph Smith and the testimony of three witnesses to the effect that God gave them a knowledge regarding the Book of Mormon, that an angel of God declared from heaven that the book had been translated by the gift and power of God. These men were Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris. They left the Church, but to the day of their death they maintained their testimony regarding the declaration of the angel, and that they were commanded to bear witness of the divinity of this book, and they did so. Eight men, some of whom were excommunicated from the Church, maintained their testimony that they had seen and handled the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and they remained true to that testimony to the day of their death. The disbelief of all the world does not prove that those men did not tell the truth, because there are no witnesses on the other side” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, p. 128).

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

The phrase, “the Father, and . . . the Son, and . . . the Holy Ghost, which is one God,” in the Testimony of the Three Witnesses, or similar phrases (see Mosiah 15:4, Alma 11:44, Mormon 7:7, and D&C 20:28) should not be understood to mean that the members of the Godhead are the same physical personage. Rather, they are three separate, distinct individuals who are agreed in one (see 1 John 5:7–8).

With reference to John 17:11, 20–23, Joseph Smith taught: “I want to read the text to you myself—‘I am agreed with the Father and the Father is agreed with me, and we are agreed as one.’ The Greek shows that it should be agreed. ‘Father, I pray for them which Thou hast given me out of the world, and not for those alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through

their word, that they all may be agreed, as Thou, Father, are with me, and I with Thee, that they also may be agreed with us,’ and all come to dwell in unity” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 372).

Points to Ponder

- Carefully analyze the title page of the Book of Mormon to find answers for the following questions:
 - Who was the Book of Mormon written to?
 - Why was it written, and what were the authors trying to accomplish?
 - What indications are there of the hand of the Lord in its coming forth?
 - What warning is given to those who might criticize it?
- When an individual comes to know that the Book of Mormon is true, what other truths must also be accepted? (see D&C 20:1–12).
- The prophets have taught us that the Book of Mormon was written for our time. What indications are there in this book that the writers knew of our particular needs? How did they know what to include that would be of value to us today? (see Mormon 8:25–35; note especially vv. 34–35).

Chapter 2

1 Nephi 1–5

Introduction

Revelation is the way God communicates with man. Nephi and his father, Lehi, were both prophets who received such communication. As you read 1 Nephi, consider the various ways and the many times God revealed his will to Lehi and Nephi. Notice particularly the faithful responses of these two great servants.

Notes and Commentary

1 Nephi. Headnote

The headnote is a summary of 1 Nephi and is part of the original text. It was not added by modern writers (note the last sentence). All of the headnotes in the Book of Mormon are part of the original record given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, including the inserts preceding individual chapters (for example, Mosiah 9 and Alma 21). The brief summaries at the head of each chapter are later additions for the reader's convenience.

1 Nephi 1:1. A Record of Nephi's People

Nephi wrote this record about thirty years after Lehi's colony left Jerusalem and journeyed to the promised land (see 1 Nephi 19:1–5, 2 Nephi 5:28–31).

1 Nephi 1:1–3. The Book of Mormon Language

In Mormon 9:32–33, Moroni indicates that the plates were written in reformed Egyptian that had been altered by the Nephites according to their manner of speech. Some scholars believe that reformed Egyptian was a type of shorthand. Moroni explains that if the plates had been larger they would have been written in Hebrew, and then the record would have been without imperfections (see v. 33). This suggests that reformed Egyptian must not have been as precise and accurate as Hebrew, and it must have required less space to write reformed Egyptian than to write Hebrew. Knowing this gives us a greater appreciation of how efficient the reformed Egyptian language must have been.

The Hebrew language is very compact when compared to English and many other western languages. A typical English sentence of fifteen words will often translate into seven to ten Hebrew words.

We have no indication of the size of the characters Mormon and Moroni used, but if they rejected Hebrew because the plates were not “sufficiently large” (v. 33), then reformed Egyptian must have been a language remarkable for its ability to convey a lot of information with few words.

1 Nephi 1:4. Prophets to Warn the People

Nephi said that “many prophets” (1 Nephi 1:4) came among the people. We know these included Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. In Jeremiah 35:15 a similar comment is made about numerous prophets being sent by the Lord to warn the people.

1 Nephi 1:4. Political Conditions

“For three years the Pharaoh of Egypt exercised political control of the kingdom of Judah through the puppet Jehoiakim. Then in the memorable year 605 B.C. the Babylonians marshalled a mighty army and crushed the Pharaoh's cohorts in the battle of Carchemish and, in so doing, took the Jewish nation out of Egypt's grasp. (The biblical account of this era is found in 2 Kings, chaps. 23–25; 2 Chronicles, chap. 36; Jeremiah, chaps. 26–39.)

“But the Jewish people did not gain their freedom. Instead of Egyptian foreigners ruling their country, Babylonian foreigners took their place. Southern Palestine became a Babylonian vassal state. Unfortunately for all concerned, they allowed the quisling Jehoiakim, Jewish appointee of Egypt, to retain his throne. Before long the new monarch and his subjects were in revolt. In response, King Nebuchadnezzar moved an army to Jerusalem and laid siege against the rebellious city. About this time Jehoiakim either died or was taken captive by the enemy, for Jehoiachin, his son, is spoken of in the biblical account as surrendering to the Babylonians.

“These struggles between Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt took place before the Book of Mormon record opens but during the lifetime of its early leading characters. When the account commences, twenty-one-year-old Zedekiah, the well-meaning but utterly weak uncle of the ill-fated King Jehoiachin, is spoken of as being in the first year of his reign. According to the book of 2 Kings, he was appointed to the throne by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It was a time of great

wickedness. Immorality and corruption were rampant. Dishonesty, false swearing, and idolatry were common vices of the day. As if the sins of the people were not already enough to invite God’s judgments, Zedekiah chose to follow the disastrous course of Jehoiakim in seeking an alliance with Egypt and scheming a break from Babylonia. It was at this point that the prophet Jeremiah, whose gloomy prophecies had already brought him notoriety in Jehoiakim’s day, thundered forth anew the ominous pronouncement that Jerusalem and its temple were doomed for destruction and the entire nation would be led into captivity if they did not repent and heed the admonitions of the Lord. But the declaration that God would turn against his chosen people and allow his sacred temple and his holy city to be destroyed was considered an outrage. To the incensed priests and princes the prophecy was traitorous and bordered on blasphemy. Jeremiah’s arrest and imprisonment were ordered” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 62–63). Had Lehi remained in Jerusalem, he likely would have received a similar fate or worse.

1 Nephi 1:16–17. Two Sets of Records

To find where Nephi’s abridgment of Lehi’s record ends and Nephi’s own record begins, see 1 Nephi 9:1 and 10:1.

1 Nephi 2:6–7. Translated Literature

Two more evidences that the Book of Mormon is translated literature are found in 1 Nephi 2:6–7. First, in many parts of the world any river is a “river of water” (v. 6), but in the Middle East, year-round rivers are scarce. During the winter rains thousands of wadis, or dry stream beds, also become rivers. In the months when it does not rain these wadis would not be rivers of water. Second, Lehi’s building an “altar of stones” (v. 7) is in direct obedience to a commandment found in Exodus 20:24–26 and Deuteronomy 27:5–6.

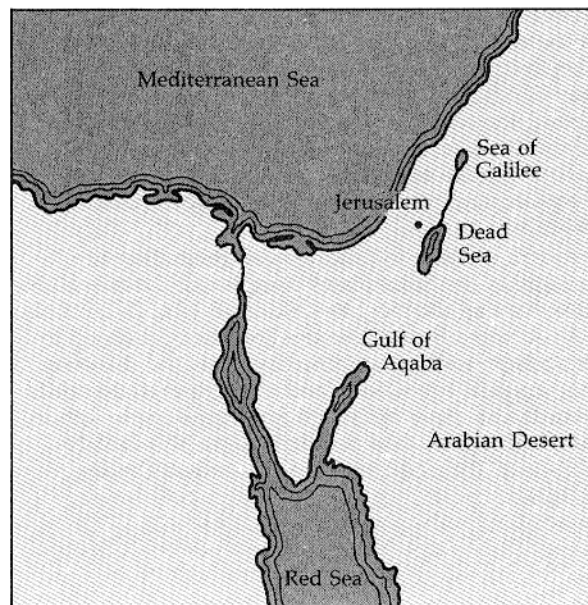
1 Nephi 2:11–24. Laman and Lemuel

Nephi’s description of his brothers is a serious indictment and shows just how hardened Laman and Lemuel had become. Note the spiritual power Lehi had (see 1 Nephi 2:14) and the source and key to Nephi’s greatness (see vv. 16, 19–20, 22).

Verses 20–24 contain the principles by which Lehi’s people were to govern themselves when they reached the promised land. What do these verses say that help us understand why the Lord had the rebellious brothers accompany their father to the promised land?

1 Nephi 3:1–10. The Journey Back to Jerusalem

The distance from Jerusalem to the Red Sea (the Gulf of Aqaba) is about 180 miles through hot, barren country infested anciently by many marauders. Lehi and his family traveled three days’ journey beyond this point (see 1 Nephi 2:5–6). This meant at least a twelve-to-fourteen-day trip one way, which gives added meaning to Nephi’s response in 1 Nephi 3:7.



1 Nephi 3:23–25. Laban

“A few deft and telling touches resurrect the pompous Laban with photographic perfection. We learn in passing that he commanded a garrison of fifty, that he met in full ceremonial armor with ‘the elders of the Jews’ for secret consultations by night, that he had control of a treasury, that he was of the old aristocracy, being a distant relative to Lehi himself, that he probably held his job because of his ancestors, . . . that his house was the storing place of very old records, that he was a large man, short-tempered, crafty, and dangerous, and to the bargain cruel, greedy, unscrupulous, weak, and given to drink” (Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, p. 111).

1 Nephi 3:26–31. Evidence of God’s Power

Several interesting points are raised in 1 Nephi 3:26–31. Could the anger of Laman and Lemuel have been related to the loss of their wealth? (see 1 Nephi 2:11). Also, on several occasions divine intervention became necessary to preserve Nephi from his brothers’ hatred, but even direct evidence of God’s power was not enough to change the hardness of their hearts.

Imagine seeing an angel and then immediately after his departure proceeding to complain again!

This evidence provides support of the Savior's parable wherein he said: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). How does this principle relate to people who say things like, "Well, if I could only see the golden plates then I would know the Book of Mormon is true"?

1 Nephi 4:4–27. Nephi's Encounter with Laban

As you read Nephi's account of his encounter with Laban, remember again his words in 1 Nephi 3:7. You can see that these words were not an idle boast, and that Nephi really meant what he said. We also learn that while the Lord "shall prepare a way" for the obedient servant to keep his commandments, the way may not be an easy one.

As you continue your study of the Book of Mormon, watch for evidence of the importance of the brass plates in the subsequent history of the Nephites.

1 Nephi 4:26. The Church in Lehi's Day

"Was there a Church anciently, and if so, how was it organized and regulated? There was not so much as the twinkling of an eye during the whole so-called pre-Christian Era when the Church of Jesus Christ was not upon the earth, organized basically in the same way it now is. Melchizedek belonged to the Church; Laban was a member; so also was Lehi, long before he left Jerusalem.

"There was always apostolic power. The Melchizedek Priesthood always directed the course of the Aaronic Priesthood. All of the prophets held a position in the hierarchy of the day" (Bruce R. McConkie, "The Bible, a Sealed Book," in *Supplement, a Symposium on the New Testament*, 1984, p. 6).

1 Nephi 4:32–37. A Binding Oath

"When he [Zoram] saw the brethren and heard Nephi's real voice he got the shock of his life and in a panic made a break for the city. In such a situation there was only one thing Nephi could possibly have done, both to spare Zoram and to avoid giving alarm—and no westerner could have guessed what it was. Nephi, a powerful fellow, held the terrified Zoram in a vice-like grip long enough to swear a solemn oath in his ear, 'as the Lord liveth, and as I live' (1 Ne. 4:32), that he would not harm him if he would listen. Zoram immediately relaxed, and Nephi swore another oath to

him that he would be a free man if he would join the party: 'Therefore, if thou wilt go down into the wilderness to my father thou shalt have place with us.' (1 Ne. 4:34.)

"What astonishes the western reader is the miraculous effect of Nephi's oath on Zoram, who upon hearing a few conventional words promptly becomes tractable, while as for the brothers, as soon as Zoram 'made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth . . . our fears did cease concerning him.' (1 Ne. 4:35, 37.)

"The reaction of both parties makes sense when one realizes that the oath is the one thing that is most sacred and inviolable among the desert people and their descendants: 'Hardly will an Arab break his oath, even if his life be in jeopardy,' for 'there is nothing stronger, and nothing more sacred than the oath among the nomads,' and even the city Arabs, if it be exacted under special conditions. 'The taking of an oath is a holy thing with the Bedouins,' says one authority, 'Wo to him who swears falsely; his social standing will be damaged and his reputation ruined. No one will receive his testimony, and he must also pay a money fine.'

"But not every oath will do. To be most binding and solemn an oath should be by the *life* of something, even if it be but a blade of grass. The only oath more awful than that 'by my life' or (less commonly) 'by the life of my head,' is the *wa hayat Allah* 'by the life of God,' or 'as the Lord Liveth,' the exact Arabic equivalent of the ancient Hebrew *hai Elohim*. . . .

"So we see that the only way that Nephi could possibly have pacified the struggling Zoram in an instant was to utter the one oath that no man would dream of breaking, the most solemn of all oaths to the Semite: 'As the Lord liveth, and as I live!' (1 Ne. 4:32.)" (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, pp. 103–5).

1 Nephi 5:10–22. The Brass Plates

"When the Lord led Lehi and his colony out from Jerusalem, they were required to take with them the *Brass Plates* of which Laban had been the custodian. These plates—which Nephi acquired through his faith, works, and zeal (1 Ne. 3; 4)—were a volume of sacred scripture. They contained a record of God's dealings with men from the beginning down to that day. They were 'the record of the Jews' (1 Ne. 3:3), a record of many of the prophecies from the beginning down to and including part of those spoken by Jeremiah. On

them was the law of Moses, the five books of Moses, and the genealogy of the Nephite forbears. (1 Ne. 3:3, 20; 4:15–16; 5:11–14.)

“There was more on them than there is in the Old Testament as we now have it. (1 Ne. 13:23.) The prophecies of Zenock, Neum, Zenos, Joseph the son of Jacob, and probably many other prophets were preserved by them, and many of these writings foretold matters pertaining to the Nephites. (1 Ne. 19:10, 21; 2 Ne. 4:2, 15; 3 Ne. 10:17.)

“The value of the Brass Plates to the Nephites cannot be overestimated. By means of them they were able to preserve the language (1 Ne. 3:19), most of the civilization, and the religious knowledge of the people from whence they came. (1 Ne. 22:30.) By way of contrast, the Mulekites, who were led out of Jerusalem some 11 years after Lehi’s departure, and who had no record equivalent to the Brass Plates, soon dwindled in apostasy and unbelief and lost their language, civilization, and religion. (Omni 14–18.)

“From prophet to prophet and generation to generation the Brass Plates were handed down and preserved by the Nephites. (Mosiah 1:16; 28:20; 3 Ne. 1:2.) At some future date the Lord has promised to bring them forth, undimmed by time and retaining their original brightness, and the scriptural accounts recorded on them are to ‘go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.’ (Alma 37:3–5; 1 Ne. 5:18–19.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 103).

Points to Ponder

- In the first chapter of the Book of Mormon, Lehi had some experiences that seem similar to what Joseph Smith went through some 2400 years later. Both men prayed and received answers, and both saw God and His son Jesus Christ. In his vision Lehi was given a book. Years later, Joseph Smith was led to the plates and translated them to bring forth the Book of Mormon. Why do you think both Joseph Smith and Lehi had such similar experiences?
- Lehi left his home and his worldly goods to obey a commandment from the Lord. Lehi did this not knowing where he was going and at great risk and hardship to his family. What made him take such a serious step? Knowing the difficulties involved and the outcome of what Lehi did, what can we learn from these experiences?
- Why did Laman and Lemuel murmur? (see 1 Nephi 2:11–13). Why did Nephi support his father? (see

vv. 16, 19). What determines whether you are a murmurer or a supporter of the Lord’s prophets?

- What evidences are there in the chapters in this lesson that Nephi had great faith? How do you think he obtained such faith?
- Lehi fulfilled the callings he received from the Lord. He declared unto the people the things the Lord commanded him to declare (see v. 1), took his family and departed into the wilderness (see vv. 2–4), and had his sons return to Jerusalem for the plates (see 1 Nephi 3). Why do you think Lehi was so diligent in completing his assignments from the Lord? How might you better fulfill your callings?
- Getting the records from Laban must have seemed like a nearly impossible task. What kinds of efforts failed and what kind succeeded? Why? (see Proverbs 3:5–6, 1 Nephi 4:6, 2 Nephi 4:34). “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14). What message is there in this for you?
- In commenting on 1 Nephi 3:7, Elder Russell M. Nelson said, “I have learned not to put question marks but to use exclamation points when calls are issued through inspired channels of priesthood government” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, pp. 76–77; or *Ensign*, May 1984, p. 52).

Chapter 3

1 Nephi 6–10

Introduction

Nephi wrote upon the plates to persuade men to come unto God (see 1 Nephi 6:3–4). While reading 1 Nephi 6–10, consider the following significant events and how they are consistent with Nephi’s intentions: the return of Nephi and his brothers to Jerusalem to invite Ishmael and his family to come with them, Lehi’s great vision of the tree of life, and the prophecies of the coming of the Messiah and of things that would happen to the house of Israel.

Notes and Commentary

1 Nephi 6. Selecting Material for the Plates

While 1 Nephi 6 is a break in the historical narrative, it is significant because it establishes the criteria Nephi and other Book of Mormon writers used to select material for inclusion on the plates.

1 Nephi 7. The Joining of Two Families

“After the Lord counseled Lehi ‘that his sons should take daughters to wife, that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise’ (1 Nephi 7:1), Lehi immediately sent back to Jerusalem for Ishmael and his family. Our present Book of Mormon does not indicate exactly why Ishmael’s family was selected (except that it included at least five unmarried women!), but perhaps the following statement provides additional important reasons for this selection:

“Whoever has read the Book of Mormon carefully will have learned that the remnants of the house of Joseph dwelt upon the American continent; and that Lehi learned by searching the records of his fathers that were written upon the plates of brass, that he was of the lineage of Manasseh. The Prophet Joseph informed us that the record of Lehi, was contained on the 116 pages that were first translated and subsequently stolen, and of which an abridgment is given us in the first Book of Nephi, which is the record of Nephi individually, he himself being of the lineage of Manasseh; but that Ishmael was of the lineage of Ephraim, and *that his sons married into Lehi’s family*, and Lehi’s sons married Ishmael’s daughters, thus fulfilling the words of Jacob upon Ephraim and Manasseh in the 48th chapter of Genesis,

which says: “And let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the land.” Thus these descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim grew together upon this American continent. . . .’ (Erastus Snow, *Journal of Discourses*, 23:184–85. Italics added.)” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 99–100).

1 Nephi 8:1. Preparation for the Journey

It is clear from the record that Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem was not a journey prompted by panic, but one that was well planned and prepared for.

1 Nephi 8:2. The Vision of the Tree of Life

In 1 Nephi 1:16, Nephi indicated that his father had written many prophecies and many things which he had seen in visions of which Nephi would not make a full account. Yet, in 1 Nephi 8, Nephi gave a detailed account of Lehi’s vision of the tree of life (see also 1 Nephi 11).

Elder Boyd K. Packer explained:

“After the people of Lehi left Jerusalem, Lehi had a vision of the tree of life. His son Nephi prayed to know its meaning. In answer, he was given a remarkable vision of Christ.

“In that vision he saw—

- A virgin bearing a child in her arms,
- One who should prepare the way—John the Baptist,
- The ministry of the Son of God,
- Twelve others following the Messiah,
- The heavens open and angels ministering to them,
- The multitudes blessed and healed,
- The crucifixion of the Christ,
- The wisdom and pride of the world opposing his work. (See 1 Nephi 11:14–36.)

“That vision is the central message of the Book of Mormon.

“The Book of Mormon is in truth another testament of Jesus Christ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 76; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 61).

1 Nephi 8:4–35. Interpretation of Lehi’s Vision

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Examples Given</i>
Dark and dreary waste (8:7)		
Large and spacious field (8:9, 20)	The world (8:20)	
Tree (8:10); also called “tree of life” (11:25; 15:21–22)	Love of God (11:21–22)	The coming of the Son of God (11:13–22)
The fruit of the tree (8:11–12)		
River of water (8:13); also called “fountain of filthy water” (12:16)	Hell and the depths thereof (12:16; 15:26–36)	Wickedness and war
Rod of iron (8:19)	The word of God (11:25; 15:23–25)	The ministry of the Son of God (11:24–25)
Mist of darkness (8:23)	Temptations of the devil (12:17)	Apostasy, wickedness, war, the great abominable church, plain and precious things removed from the scriptures (12:19–23; 13:1–9, 20–29)
Great and spacious building (8:26)	The pride, wisdom, and vain imaginations of the world (11:35–36, 12:18)	The persecution of the Son of God and those who followed him (11:26–36)

(Adapted from Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 101.)

In addition to the symbols listed above, ponder the following questions as you read about Lehi’s dream in 1 Nephi 8:4–35:

What do you learn about the tree of life from other scriptures? (see Revelation 2:7, 22:1–6, 14; 2 Nephi 2:15; Alma 5:34).

What is the relationship between 1 Nephi 8:12 and 2 Nephi 2:25?

When Lehi partook of the fruit himself what was his first desire? (see 1 Nephi 8:12).

Does the phrase “strait and narrow path” in 1 Nephi 8:20 sound familiar? (see Matthew 7:14, 2 Nephi 31:17–19). In Lehi’s dream, what helped a person keep on this path?

Nephi later used his father’s phrase “press forward” (1 Nephi 8:24) in a great doctrinal discourse (see 2 Nephi 31:20). What is conveyed by this phrase?

The great and spacious building seen by Lehi, which represents the pride of the world (see 1 Nephi 11:36), was shown “in the air, high above the earth” (1 Nephi 8:26). When a building is in the air it has no foundation. How is this related to pride? Notice how often the description “lifted up” in pride is used in the

scriptures (see 2 Nephi 26:20, Jacob 1:16, Mosiah 11:5, Alma 1:6, Helaman 3:34, 3 Nephi 6:10, Mormon 8:28). The great and spacious building is also related to “high-mindedness” or being “highminded” (D&C 90:17; see also Romans 11:20, 1 Timothy 6:17), and those with pride are spoken of as being brought “down” (Isaiah 25:11, Ezekiel 30:6).

How did the people in the great and spacious building impel those pressing forward to the tree to feel ashamed? (see 1 Nephi 8:26–28).

1 Nephi 8:36–38. Exhortation to Laman and Lemuel

After Lehi’s dream was over, he felt great concern for Laman and Lemuel and earnestly tried to influence them to be righteous.

Did Lehi fail as a parent? (see Deuteronomy 6:6–7, Ezekiel 3:18–19, D&C 68:25). It appears that Lehi did all he could as a parent to teach all of his children the gospel principles. Laman’s and Lemuel’s rejection of these teachings was a product of their own unwise use of agency; it was not that they had not been taught well.

1 Nephi 9:2–6. Two Sets of Plates

It seems that Nephi had finished abridging the record of his father (see 1 Nephi 1:17) and was ready to proceed with his own record. Before doing so, however, he explained the difference between the two sets of plates he was working on. Elder James E. Talmage has given us further insight into these two sets of plates:

“The Plates of Nephi are so named from the fact that they were prepared and their record was begun by Nephi, son of Lehi. These plates were of two kinds, which may be distinguished as the larger plates and the smaller plates. Nephi began his labors as a recorder by engraving on his plates a historical account of his people from the time his father left Jerusalem. This account recited the story of their wanderings, their prosperity and distress, the reigns of their kings and the wars and contentions of the people; the record was in the nature of a secular history. . . .

“By command of the Lord, Nephi made other plates, upon which he recorded particularly what may be called in a broad sense the ecclesiastical history of his people, citing only such instances of other events as seemed necessary to the proper sequence of the narrative. ‘I have received a commandment of the Lord,’ says Nephi, ‘that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people.’ The object of this double line of history was unknown to Nephi; it was enough for him that the Lord required the labor” (*The Articles of Faith*, pp. 263–64).

1 Nephi 10:4–5. The Messiah

As Christians we refer to Jesus as “the Christ.” This comes from the Greek *Christus* meaning “the anointed one.” *Christus* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word also meaning “the anointed one.” The Hebrew word is *Meshiach*, or *Messiah* as we have anglicized it. It is proper, therefore, that Lehi would refer to the prophet mentioned in 1 Nephi 10:4–5 as the Messiah, the Savior, and the Redeemer.

1 Nephi 10:12–14. Allegory of the Olive Tree

Lehi’s comparison of the house of Israel to an olive tree could have come from his reading of the brass plates, for we know they contained the allegory of the olive trees later quoted by Jacob (see Jacob 5).

Points to Ponder

- In 1 Nephi 6:4–5 Nephi identifies his intentions in writing the small plates. What does this tell you about the manner in which you should study the Book of Mormon and the things to which you should give closest attention as you study?
- What is the relationship between 1 Nephi 3:7 and 1 Nephi 7:12? Why can we have implicit faith that God will provide a way for us to do anything he commands us to do? (see Jeremiah 32:17, Mosiah 4:9).
- Nephi made a second set of records even though he did not understand the Lord’s purpose for having them made (see 1 Nephi 9:5). Why do you think the Lord had these plates made? (see Words of Mormon 1:5–7, D&C 10:38–45; see also headnotes to D&C 3, 10).

Chapter 4

1 Nephi 11–14

Introduction

Nephi said, “My soul delighteth in the things of the Lord” (2 Nephi 4:16), and “My heart delighteth in righteousness” (2 Nephi 9:49). Because Nephi delighted in the things of God he had a great desire to “know of the mysteries of God” (1 Nephi 2:16) and to keep the commandments (see 1 Nephi 17:15, 2 Nephi 31:10). Because he obeyed the commandments of God, Nephi was able to draw close to God and obtain the desires of his heart. He pondered the teachings of his father and sought to obtain from God a knowledge of the things his father had seen. Because of his faith he was given a great and marvelous vision of the Son of God, the future of his people, and the destiny of the kingdom of God.

Notes and Commentary

1 Nephi 11:1. Study and Meditation

While Nephi was pondering in his heart the things his father had seen, he was “caught away in the Spirit of the Lord” (1 Nephi 11:1).

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were reading the scriptures when one verse, as they later wrote, “caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit.

“*And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings*” (D&C 76:19; emphasis added). What followed was the vision of the three degrees of glory.

President Joseph F. Smith recorded: “On the third of October, in the year nineteen hundred and eighteen, I sat in my room *pondering* over the scriptures;

“*And reflecting* upon the great atoning sacrifice that was made by the Son of God. . . .

“*As I pondered* over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were opened” (D&C 138:1–2, 11; emphasis added). President Smith then had a great vision of the spirit world and Christ’s visit to it.

These accounts teach an important lesson concerning the value of quiet study and meditation and how one comes to know the mysteries of God. In Moroni 10:3–5 Moroni uses the word *ponder* as

one of the steps in acquiring a testimony of the Book of Mormon.

1 Nephi 11:21. “The Son of the Eternal Father!”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “Jesus is the Son of God, not of the Holy Ghost. Just as Jesus is literally the Son of Mary, so he is the personal and literal offspring of God the Eternal Father, who himself is an exalted personage having a tangible body of flesh and bones. (D. & C. 130:22.) Apostate religionists—unable to distinguish between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—falsely suppose that the Holy Ghost was the Father of our Lord. Matthew’s statement, ‘she was found with child of the Holy Ghost,’ properly translated should say, ‘she was found with child *by the power of the Holy Ghost.*’ (Matt. 1:18.) Luke’s account (Luke 1:35) accurately records what took place. Alma perfectly describes our Lord’s conception and birth by prophesying: Christ ‘shall be born of Mary, . . . she being a virgin, 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.) Nephi spoke similarly when he said that at the time of her conception, Mary ‘was carried away in the Spirit,’ with the result that the child born of her was ‘the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father.’ (1 Ne. 11:19–21.) As Gabriel told Luke, he was the ‘Son of the Highest’ (Luke 1:32), and ‘the Highest’ is the first member of the godhead, not the third” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:82–83).

1 Nephi 11:26. “Behold the Condescension of God!”

In 1 Nephi 11:26 Nephi is taught a second time about the condescension of God. The first time this subject was taught (see v. 16) it was followed by a vision of the birth of the Son of God. The second time it is followed by a vision of Christ’s ministry.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented on the two different senses of the condescension of God in this way: “The condescension of God (meaning the Father) consists in the fact that though he is an exalted, perfected, glorified Personage, he became the personal and literal Father of a mortal Offspring born of mortal woman. And the condescension of God (meaning the Son) consists in the fact that though he himself is the Lord Omnipotent, the very Being who created the

earth and all things that in it are, yet being born of mortal woman, he submitted to all the trials of mortality, suffering ‘temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death’ (Mosiah 3:5–8), finally being put to death in a most ignominious manner” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 155).

1 Nephi 12–14. Nephi’s Vision

Nephi’s vision has the following chronological pattern:

The ministry and atoning sacrifice of the Lord (see 1 Nephi 11:27–36).

Future history of Nephi’s descendants (see 1 Nephi 12).

A great gentile nation in the land of promise (see 1 Nephi 13, 14:1–8).

The great and abominable church that makes war with the church of the Lamb of God (see vv. 9–14).

Future events seen by Nephi which were to be written by the Apostle John (see vv. 18–27).

1 Nephi 13:1–3. The Gentiles

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “Various meanings have been attached to the name *Gentiles* in different ages, depending on the historical setting or the doctrinal teachings involved. Literally the meaning is, ‘of the same clan or race,’ and Biblical revisions frequently substitute the word *nations* in its place.

“The descendants of Noah’s son Japheth were called Gentiles (Gen. 10:1–5), and in this sense the descendants of Shem . . . and of Ham . . . would not be Gentiles. In the days of Abraham, the term was used to refer to those nations and peoples who had not descended from him, with the added assurance that all Gentiles who should receive the gospel would be adopted into the lineage of Abraham and be accounted his seed. (Abra. 2:9–11.) The Prophet taught that those so adopted became literally of the blood of Abraham. (*Teachings*, pp. 149–150.) In the days of ancient Israel, those not of the lineage of Jacob were considered to be Gentiles, although the Arabs and other races of Semitic origin who traced their lineage back to Abraham would not have been Gentiles in the strict Abrahamic use of the word.

“After the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed and the Ten Tribes were led away into Assyrian captivity, those of the Kingdom of Judah called themselves Jews and designated all others as Gentiles. It is this concept

that would have been taught to Lehi, Mulek and the other Jews who came to the Western Hemisphere to found the great Nephite and Lamanite civilizations. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the Book of Mormon repeatedly speaking of Jew and Gentile as though this phrase marked a division between all men; to find the United States described as a Gentile Nation (1 Ne. 13; 3 Ne. 21); and to find the promise that the Book of Mormon would come forth ‘by way of the Gentile.’ (Title page of Book of Mormon; D. & C. 20:9.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 310–11).

1 Nephi 13:10–12. Christopher Columbus

“Note that Nephi says that ‘the Spirit of God came down and wrought upon the man,’ thus causing him (Columbus) to sail across ‘the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren who were in the promised land.’ . . .

“Columbus believed he could reach ‘the Indies’ by sailing westward. Although there were some people who still thought the world was flat, Columbus did not, and he was anxious to make his journey. But it was more than an urge for adventure that impelled the discoverer to undertake what he called ‘his enterprise.’

“Go to any public library, read almost any detailed biography of the discoverer, and it becomes immediately clear that he felt himself an inspired man, sent of heaven to make the voyage. For example, *Columbus, Don Quixote of the Seas*, written in German by Jacob Wassermann and translated into English by Eric Sutton, tells the story very well:

““From my first youth onward, I was a seaman and have so continued until this day. . . . Wherever on the earth a ship has been, I have been. I have spoken and treated with learned men, priests, and laymen, Latins and Greeks, Jews and Moors, and with many men of other faiths. The Lord was well disposed to my desire, and He bestowed upon me courage and understanding; knowledge of seafaring He gave me in abundance, of astrology as much as was needed, and of geometry and astronomy likewise. Further, He gave me joy and cunning in drawing maps and thereon cities, mountains, rivers, islands, and harbours, each one in its place. I have seen and truly I have studied all books—cosmographies, histories, chronicles, and philosophies, and other arts, for which our Lord unlocked my mind, sent me upon the sea, and gave me fire for the deed. Those who heard of my emprise called it foolish, mocked me, and laughed. But who can doubt but that *the Holy Ghost inspired me?*’ (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1930, pp. 19–20.

Italics added.)” (Mark E. Petersen, *The Great Prologue*, pp. 25–26).

1 Nephi 13:13. “Out of Captivity”

“There are expressions in this part of the prophecy that on the surface seem to have little importance but that are of great significance. For example, Nephi says these colonists fled ‘out of captivity’ as they came to the New World. Did they really ‘flee out of captivity’? How did Nephi know that?”

“When it is realized how despotic the European kings were at this period, it is easily understood that the colonists did indeed flee from captivity and oppression. Under such kings as James I of England, there was hardly a semblance of freedom. He was the supreme dictator in government, in economics, in education (what there was of it), and in the state religion. He controlled the detailed lives of his people.

“France, Spain, England, and Portugal were the principal powers involved in the discovery and exploration of America, and this is significant, as we shall point out later. All were ruled by despots, and when immigrants finally were allowed to leave the ‘mother countries,’ they indeed fled from captivity. The history of the Pilgrims and Puritans gives ample evidence of this fact” (Petersen, *Great Prologue*, pp. 32–33).

1 Nephi 13:15–19. The Establishment of America

“This great American nation the Almighty raised up by the power of his omnipotent hand, that it might be possible in the latter days for the kingdom of God to be established in the earth. If the Lord had not prepared the way by laying the foundations of this glorious nation, it would have been impossible (under the stringent laws and bigotry of the monarchical governments of the world) to have laid the foundations for the coming of his great kingdom. The Lord has done this. His hand has been over this nation, and it is his purpose and design to enlarge it, make it glorious above all others, and to give it dominion, and power over the earth, to the end that those who are kept in bondage and serfdom may be brought to the enjoyment of the fullest freedom and liberty of conscience possible for intelligent men to exercise in the earth” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 409).

1 Nephi 13:19. “Delivered by the Power of God”

Elder Spencer W. Kimball spoke of the Lord’s hand in the preservation of the early colonists of America and their deliverance from an army that was seemingly far superior to them:

“I have a firm conviction that the Lord led the Pilgrims and the Puritans across the ocean, perhaps permitted the persecutions that would bring them here, so that when they came to the American shores with their righteous blood and their high ideals and standards, they would form the basis of a nation which would make possible the restoration of the gospel. I am sure that since there was not religious liberty, not political liberty here, the Lord permitted these few poorly-armed and ill-clad men at Valley Forge and elsewhere to defeat a great army with its trained soldiery and its many mercenaries, a few against the many, but the few had on their side the Lord God of heaven, that gave them victory. And there came political liberty and religious liberty with it, all in preparation for the day when a young boy would come forth and would seek and make contact with the Lord and open the doors of heaven again. Following that great manifestation to Joseph Smith came the opening of Cumorah Hill and the speaking of the dead from the dust” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, p. 64).

1 Nephi 13:28. “Many Plain and Precious Things”

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 327).

Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible helped restore many of the “plain and precious things” (1 Nephi 13:28) which were lost.

1 Nephi 13:39. “Other Books”

“These *last records* which were to come forth to bear witness of the ‘book of the Lamb of God,’ which is the Bible, are the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the revelations of the Lord to Joseph Smith” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny*, pp. 411–12).

1 Nephi 14:10. “The Church of the Devil”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined the church of the devil in the following way: “The church of the devil is the world; it is all the carnality and evil to which fallen man is heir; it is every unholy and wicked practice; it is every false religion, every supposed system of salvation which does not actually save and exalt man in the highest heaven of the celestial world. It is every church except the true church, whether parading under a Christian or a pagan banner. As Moroni will say in a later era of Nephite history,

and as we shall ascertain in our evaluation of Rev. 18:1–24, it is ‘secret combinations,’ oath-bound societies, and the great world force of Godless communism. (Ether 8:14–26.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:551).

1 Nephi 14:13. A “Final Battle”

President Hugh B. Brown spoke of the “final battle” between Satan and his followers and the followers of God:

“I hope that every young man under the sound of my voice will resolve tonight, ‘I am going to keep myself clean. I am going to serve the Lord. I am going to prepare every way I can for future service, because I want to be prepared when the final battle shall come.’”

“And some of you young men are going to engage in that battle. Some of you are going to engage in the final testing time, which is coming and which is closer to us than we know” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, p. 115).

1 Nephi 14:14. “Armed with Righteousness”

To be armed with righteousness is to be armed with the power of God and to be worthy of the Lord’s protecting care. The Lord has made it clear that those who will be safe in the last days are those who have “received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide” (D&C 45:57).

President Harold B. Lee taught: “By faith in God you can be attuned to the Infinite and by power and wisdom obtained from your Heavenly Father harness the powers of the universe to serve you in your hour of need in the solution of problems too great for your human strength or intelligence” (*Church News*, 15 Aug. 1970, p. 2).

With the power of the priesthood, faith, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Saints of the last days will be armed sufficiently to withstand all opposition.

Points to Ponder

- What question did the messenger ask Nephi before showing him the vision? (see 1 Nephi 11:4). How important is faith in obtaining the things we desire from the Lord, and what is the result when faith is not present? (see Matthew 21:22, Mark 9:23, 1 Nephi 2:12–13, 15:6–11, 3 Nephi 15:18, 19:34–35).
- What responsibility did the messenger give Nephi before showing him a vision of the Son of God? (see 1 Nephi 11:7). Did Nephi do what he was instructed to do? (see 1 Nephi 14:29–30). How does this relate to the Joseph Smith Translation of John 1:19, and why is it significant?
- What is the relationship of the coming of Jesus and the tree of life? (see 1 Nephi 11:13–33).
- Nephi said the angel showed him a book (the Bible) which was a record of the Jews and was had among the Gentiles (see 1 Nephi 13:20–23). What three important items was Nephi told the book contained when it came forth from the Jews? (see vv. 23–24).
 - What did the great and abominable church take from the record, and why was this done? (see vv. 26–28).
 - What was Nephi told would happen when those things were taken out of the record? (see v. 29).
- Nephi saw that the record of the Jews would come from the Gentiles to Lehi’s posterity (see v. 38), and that “other books” (v. 39) would also come forth through the Gentiles. What four important things would the “other books” do? (see vv. 39–40).
- Nephi said the people of the world would divide into “two churches” (1 Nephi 14:10), and that those of the church of the devil would fight against the church of the Lamb of God, which would be relatively small (vv. 12–13). What would keep those of the Lord’s church from being overthrown? (see v. 14). How does Nephi’s message here relate to the message in 1 Nephi 22:16–17, 22 and Doctrine and Covenants 103:5–10?

Chapter 5

1 Nephi 15–17

Introduction

Lehi’s family traveled together through the same wilderness; however, some looked to God and trusted in him during trials, while others complained and showed a spirit of rebellion and a lack of faith. It is not the conditions people are in that produce happiness but how they respond to those conditions. In 1 Nephi 15–17 we are told that those who are faithful and seek the Lord during difficult times will be supported by him. Even though we may be required to experience great hardship, we will prevail over any difficulty by exercising faith and trust in the Lord.

Notes and Commentary

1 Nephi 15:3, 8–11. “Inquire of the Lord”

Elder Boyd K. Packer taught that everyone may receive spiritual guidance in the same way as an Apostle if they will diligently seek the Lord, ask with faith, and obey his commandments:

“You can learn now, in your youth, to be led by the Holy Ghost.

“As an Apostle I listen now to the same inspiration, coming from the same source, in the same way, that I listened to as a boy. The signal is much clearer now. . . .

“No message is repeated more times in scripture than the simple thought: ‘Ask, and ye shall receive’ (D&C 4:7).

“I often ask the Lord for direction from Him. I will not, however, willingly accept promptings from any unworthy source. I refuse them. I do not want them, and I say so.

“Young people, carry a prayer in your heart always. Let sleep come every night with your mind centered in prayer.

“Keep the Word of Wisdom.

“Read the scriptures.

“Listen to your parents and to the leaders of the Church.

“Stay away from places and things that common sense tells you will interfere with inspiration.

“Develop your spiritual capacities.

“Learn to tune out the static and the interference.

“Avoid the substitutes and the counterfeits!

“Learn to be inspired and directed by the Holy Ghost” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 21).

1 Nephi 15:12–16. “The True Vine”

Of the great latter-day work among the Lamanites, President Spencer W. Kimball stated:

“Of immense importance to this work of gathering the scattered branches of the house of Israel is the work of carrying the blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to the Lamanites, for the Lord’s work in these latter days can in no wise be complete until these children of great promise are brought back into the fold. The Lord said through his prophet Lehi, ‘Behold, I say unto you, Yea; they shall be remembered again among the house of Israel; they shall be grafted in, being a natural branch of the olive-tree, into the true olive-tree.’ (1 Ne. 15:16.) We are witnesses to these events. . . .

“. . . For a thousand years after the closing of the Book of Mormon record, these people wandered in spiritual darkness and were scattered upon the American continents and the isles of the sea. They lost their written language, their high culture, and, worst of all, their knowledge of the living God and his work. Faith was replaced by fear, rich language by crippled dialects, and an understanding of God and his ways by idolatry. . . . Only the most brazen soul could fail to weep when contemplating the fall of this people, and yet it was the decree of the Lord that the Lamanites should be preserved in the land, that this remnant of Joseph should again come into their promised inheritance. . . .

“. . . The Lord’s promises with regard to the Lamanites began to be fulfilled with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in this dispensation (see Eth. 4:17). . . .

“Truly our paths have met once more—we a mixed remnant of Israel, principally Ephraim, even referred to as gentiles, now come forth out of captivity (see, e.g., 1 Ne. 13:19, 39), . . . now only through the

grace of Almighty God restored to the blessings of the gospel, that we in turn might be a blessing to the nations of the earth; and the Lamanites, also a people of disobedience now returned to the fold. . . .

“The Lamanites must rise again in dignity and strength to fully join their brethren and sisters of the household of God in carrying forth his work in preparation for that day when the Lord Jesus Christ will return to lead his people” (“Our Paths Have Met Again,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1975, pp. 4–5, 7).

1 Nephi 15:12–18. The Jews

The Book of Mormon writers often used the term *Jew* in a broader sense than we use it today. By Lehi’s time the Ten Tribes had been lost and the kingdom of Judah was the only known group of Israelites, so the term *Jew* sometimes meant more than just a member of the tribe of Judah. Throughout the Book of Mormon we find this broad usage where often the world is divided into Jews and Gentiles (see 1 Nephi 13:42, 2 Nephi 27:1, Mormon 7:8). In these verses Nephi clearly foresees the mission, trials, scatterings, and destiny of the tribes of Israel.

1 Nephi 15:32–35. “Judged of Their Works”

President Spencer W. Kimball made it clear that people cannot escape the consequences of unworthy acts: “Every soul must stand trial and pay the uttermost farthing in one way or another. Escape from the consequences of acts of free agency is an impossibility. No one, however clever, bypasses the ‘due reward of our deeds.’ There are dark, deep corners, locked rooms, isolated spots, but no act, good or bad; no thought, ugly or beautiful, ever escapes being seen or heard. Every one will make the imprint on the individual and be recorded, to be met and paid for. Hence, one only deceives himself to think he is ‘getting by’ with anything improper” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 155).

1 Nephi 16:9–10. The Liahona

Like the Urim and Thummim, the Liahona was a physical device that aided in the coming forth of revelation. Mechanically, it pointed the direction of travel for Lehi’s family (see 1 Nephi 16:10). The Liahona, however, had more than a mechanical function. The arrows or pointers only worked according to faith (see v. 28). Even more remarkable, on the ball appeared writing which instructed and exhorted Lehi’s family (see vv. 26–27, 29). Nephi indicated that the writings were “plain to be read” and

gave “understanding concerning the ways of the Lord” (v. 29).

The Liahona was indeed a remarkable instrument. In it Alma saw a type or symbol of the word of God, or the gospel (see Alma 37:38–47). The Liahona was treasured by the writers of the Book of Mormon and seems to have been passed on with the plates. It, along with the plates, the Urim and Thummim, the breastplate, and the sword of Laban were shown to the Three Witnesses by Moroni (see D&C 17:1).

1 Nephi 16:18. “Bow . . . Made of Fine Steel”

“Through the years critics of the Book of Mormon have constantly called attention to the mention of steel in that book as a gross anachronism. But now we are being reminded that one cannot be dogmatic in dating the appearance of steel since there is more than one kind of steel with ‘a whole series of variants in the combination of iron and steel components’ in ancient times; and when a particularly fine combination was hit upon it would be kept secret in ‘individual workshops’ and ‘passed on from father to son for many generations.’ Hence it is not too surprising to learn that ‘even in early European times’ there is evidence for the production of steel ‘of very high quality’ and extreme hardness. Further east steel is attested even earlier” (Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World*, p. 254).

1 Nephi 16:18–32. Nephi’s Confidence in Lehi

Elder Marion D. Hanks said: “I see a lesson of life here that I do not think Joseph Smith could possibly have contrived. It has too much meaning. He did not have the experience. He had not lived long enough. This is so simple a thing that I doubt many would pause to note it. It is the lesson of the day Nephi broke his bow when they were in the wilderness. This bow was a symbol of food. He was keeping them alive, being a great hunter. And when that bow broke they were in trouble. Laman and Lemuel complained, of course. They were habituated to, they were looking for trouble. But for the first and only time the book tells us about, that I know of, even wonderful old father Lehi complained. He to whom God had revealed his will, this Lehi, when it came to facing starvation, even he complained. Then what happened? This situation is sometime present in almost every business, every college, every governmental unit in the land, in many homes, in churches, where there is a crown prince and heir apparent, the boy who is ready to step up. Lehi was the prophet, but he was old. Nephi had already been designated to succeed. He had seen angels and

had talked with the spirit of the Lord. He had had marvelous experiences. The time was here, now, for him to take over—his dad was wavering. The old man had lost it.

“What to do? Nephi says he made a bow and an arrow out of some available wood, got a sling and stones and, ‘I said unto my Father, “Whither shall I go to obtain food?”’ It is a simple thing, isn’t it? This is what Goethe meant when he said, ‘If you treat an individual as he is, he will stay as he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he could be and ought to be, he will become what he ought to be.’ This means that Nephi went to his father and said, ‘Dad, the Lord has blessed you. You are his servant. I need to know where to go to get food. Dad, you ask him, will you?’ Oh, he could have gone to his own knees. He could have taken over.

“I count this one of the really significant lessons of life in the book, and, I repeat, the pages are full of them. A son who had strength enough, and humility enough, and manliness enough to go to his wavering superior and say, ‘You ask God, will you?’ because somehow he knew this is how you make men strong, that wise confidence in men builds them. Lehi asked God and God told him, and Lehi’s leadership was restored” (*Steps to Learning*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 4 May 1960], p. 7).

President Ezra Taft Benson tells of an actual experience that illustrates how this principle can be applied:

“Some time ago, a young man came to my office requesting a blessing. He was about eighteen years of age and had some problems. There were no serious moral problems, but he was mixed up in his thinking and worried. He requested a blessing.

“I said to him, ‘Have you ever asked your father to give you a blessing? Your father is a member of the Church, I assume?’

“He said, ‘Yes, he is an elder, a rather inactive elder.’

“When I asked, ‘Do you love your father?’ he replied, ‘Yes, Brother Benson, he is a good man. I love him.’ He then said, ‘He doesn’t attend to his priesthood duties as he should. He doesn’t go to church regularly, I don’t know that he is a tithe payer, but he is a good man, a good provider, a kind man.’

“I said, ‘How would you like to talk to him at an opportune time and ask him if he would be willing to give you a father’s blessing?’

“‘Oh,’ he said, ‘I think that would frighten him.’

“I then said, ‘Are you willing to try it? I will be praying for you.’

“He said, ‘All right; on that basis, I will.’

“A few days later he came back. He said, ‘Brother Benson, that’s the sweetest thing that has happened in our family.’ He could hardly control his feelings as he told me what had happened. He said, ‘When the opportunity was right, I mentioned it to Father, and he replied, “Son, do you really want me to give you a blessing?” I told him, “Yes, Dad, I would like you to.”’ Then he said, ‘Brother Benson, he gave me one of the most beautiful blessings you could ever ask for. Mother sat there crying all during the blessing. When he got through there was a bond of appreciation and gratitude and love between us that we have never had in our home.’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, pp. 45–46; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, pp. 31–32).

1 Nephi 16:36–39. Never Truly Converted

Never at any time were Laman and Lemuel truly converted. To be converted is to undergo change within the inner man. This change requires a contrite spirit and a broken heart, which means to humble yourself before God. Laman and Lemuel refused to do this, for as Nephi stated, they were “hard in their hearts, therefore they did not look unto the Lord as they ought” (1 Nephi 15:3). Laman and Lemuel refused to yield their hearts unto the Lord, so no experience could have changed them. They were impressed with the miraculous power demonstrated by their brother, but the effect was not lasting and did not change their hearts because, as Nephi later commented, they were “past feeling” (1 Nephi 17:45).

1 Nephi 17:1–4. Strength to Colonize the New World

Lehi’s people were strengthened both spiritually and physically as they wandered in the wilderness. Through their hardships they were prepared to establish a civilization in the new world. Nephi comments that the Lord “did straiten [the Israelites] in the wilderness with his rod” (1 Nephi 17:41). Certainly the eight years in the deserts of the Arabian peninsula did much to prepare Lehi’s family.

1 Nephi 17:7–19. Nephi’s Great Faith in God

Nephi’s response to the Lord’s command to build a ship is another remarkable insight into his faith. Several of the great prophets felt overwhelmed by tasks the Lord assigned to them. Moses felt inadequate in confronting Pharaoh and asked for someone to speak for him (see Exodus 4:10–17). Enoch felt he was slow of speech and asked the Lord why he wanted him (see Moses 6:31). Nephi easily could have wondered how he could ever know how to build an oceangoing ship capable of carrying approximately two dozen people. But his immediate response was simply: “Whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten . . . ?” (1 Nephi 17:9). Obviously Nephi’s confidence did not come from any previous shipbuilding experience, for Laman and Lemuel’s reaction shows how ridiculous the idea was to them (see vv. 17–19). Rather, Nephi’s confidence stemmed from his faith in God, and he was shown how to build the ship.

1 Nephi 17:23–34. The Miracles of the Exodus

“The so-called higher critics of the Bible have raised the question as to whether or not the miracles of the exodus of Israel under Moses actually happened as they are recorded in the Old Testament. (See Exodus 14:19–20, 26–31; 16:4, 15; 17:5–6; Numbers 21:6–9.) However, the Book of Mormon substantiates the actuality of these miraculous events. (1 Nephi 17:23, 26, 28, 29, 30, 41.) Inasmuch as Nephi’s knowledge of these miracles came from the authentic account on the brass plates of Laban (1 Nephi 5:11), Latter-day Saints should have no question concerning the reliability of the biblical account. Once again the Book of Mormon serves as a witness to its companion scripture, the Bible” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 115).

Nephi seems to see in his experiences a type or parallel of the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness (see 1 Nephi 17:13, 23, 30, 41–42).

1 Nephi 17:45. “Feel His Words”

Elder Boyd K. Packer taught that “inspiration comes more as a feeling than as a sound” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 20). He later explained: “We do not have the words (even the scriptures do not have words) which perfectly describe the Spirit. The scriptures generally use the word voice, which does not exactly fit. These delicate, refined spiritual communications are not seen with our eyes, nor heard with our ears. And even

though it is described as a voice, it is a voice that one feels, more than one hears” (“The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, p. 52).

1 Nephi 17:46–55. True Worship Centered in God

In 1 Nephi 17:46–55 Laman and Lemuel received a powerful, tangible witness that the power of the Lord was with Nephi. Their immediate reaction was to fall down and worship Nephi (see v. 55). In doing so they demonstrated a common mistake of men; namely, they wanted to worship the man with the power rather than God, the source of the power. Like other prophets faced with this tendency to personal adoration, Nephi teaches where the true worship should be centered (see also Paul and Barnabas’s reaction to a similar situation in Acts 14:8–18, and the angel’s reaction when John fell at his feet after seeing the great vision in Revelation 22:8–9).

Points to Ponder

- When Laman and Lemuel were unable to understand the words their father had spoken, Nephi asked them if they had inquired of the Lord. They said that they had not, “for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us” (1 Nephi 15:9). Why do you think Laman and Lemuel responded that way? According to Nephi, what were they lacking? (see v. 11). Under what conditions can we ask and receive as the Lord has promised?
- How long did Lehi’s family travel in the wilderness? (see 1 Nephi 17:4). What were some of the hardships they were required to endure? (see vv. 1–2, 20). Why do you think the Lord permitted such trials? (see Mosiah 1:16–17, Alma 37:41–43).
- In what ways did Nephi seek to bless the family of Lehi? (see 1 Nephi 16–17). How might you bless the lives of the people you associate with on a daily basis?

Chapter 6

1 Nephi 18–22

Introduction

The faithful members of Lehi's family experienced great difficulty in building a ship and coming to the promised land. Despite these challenges, they were abundantly blessed. Truly, "the righteous need not fear" (1 Nephi 22:17). To help us understand this glorious principle further, Nephi quotes the prophet Isaiah as well as giving us his own inspired insight.

Notes and Commentary

1 Nephi 18:5–10. Proper Dancing and Singing

Some people may conclude from 1 Nephi 18:5–10 that the Lord does not approve of dancing or singing. Nephi says twice in verse 9 that his brethren and their wives fell into error when their dancing and singing led them "to speak with much rudeness." The word *rude* refers to being harsh, vulgar, or coarse. The Lord has stated that he approves of proper dancing and singing (see Psalm 149:1–4, D&C 136:28). Note from these scriptures that dancing and singing are ways of praising the Lord. However, Satan can use music as a means of corruption and loss of the Spirit. That is why Church leaders caution us about the kinds of music we listen and respond to.

1 Nephi 18:24–25. Horses Before Columbus's Time

"If Joseph Smith had been writing the Book of Mormon instead of translating it from ancient records, he would have been very foolish to have included references to horses on the American continent in Book of Mormon times. (1 Nephi 18:25; Enos 21.) In 1830, nearly all the historians and scholars were convinced there had been no horses on the American continent before the coming of Columbus. After the Book of Mormon was published, however, archaeological discoveries were made that clearly indicate that horses were in the Americas before Columbus arrived. In the asphalt deposits of Rancho LaBrea in southern California, numerous fossil remains of horses have been found that antedate Book of Mormon times. Although these discoveries do not absolutely prove horses were in the Americas in the time period covered by the Book of Mormon (about 2600 B.C. to A.D. 421), they do prove horses were there before the coming of Columbus" (Daniel H.

Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 117).

1 Nephi 19:10–12. The Sign of Jesus' Crucifixion

"A careful reading of these words of Zenos seems to indicate that the 'three days of darkness' that were to accompany the crucifixion of Christ were not to be a sign to those of the house of Israel around Jerusalem but only to those who lived away from Jerusalem or on 'the isles of the sea.' (1 Nephi 19:10.) The sign to be given to those at Jerusalem is listed later by Zenos wherein he states, 'And as for those who are at Jerusalem . . . they shall be scourged by all people, because they crucify the God of Israel.' (1 Nephi 19:13.)" (Ludlow, *Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 120; see also Matthew 27:50–53).

1 Nephi 19:13–19. The Persecutions of the Jews

For centuries apostate Christianity used the crucifixion of Jesus as an excuse for persecuting the Jews. Occasionally people still say, "This long history of rejection is the punishment for what they did to Jesus."

In his quoting of Zenos in 1 Nephi 19:13–19, Nephi gave us some important insights into the Jews and their tragic history. There is no indication that because they are "scourged by all people, because they crucify the God of Israel" (v. 13) this scourging is initiated by God. When the Lord's people reject him, the judgments of God overtake them. Often this is the result of their unwillingness to turn to God for help, protection, or deliverance. People then become victims of their own wickedness.

Mormon made this insightful comment: "Behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished; for it is the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed" (Mormon 4:5). Anyone who thinks that persecution of the Jews or other minority groups is pleasing to God is in deep need of repentance (see 2 Nephi 29:5).

Zenos pointed out that punishments came upon the Jews not just because they crucified the God of Israel, but because they turned their hearts aside, thus "rejecting signs and wonders, and the power and glory of the God of Israel" (1 Nephi 19:13). Israel (not just

the Jews) had turned their hearts from Jesus (who in his premortal state was Jehovah, the God of Israel) for centuries before he was crucified in Jerusalem. This is the root of Israel's persecution and tragedy, from the fall of the ten tribes in 721 B.C. to the centuries of persecution of the Jews and the Lamanites. As Christ lamented, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, . . . and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37). Nephi promises the same judgments for all who harden their hearts (see 1 Nephi 22:18–19).

Zenos promised that the moment Israel turns their hearts to the Holy One of Israel, the Lord will remember his covenants and will restore his people to power and favor. The significance of Zenos's words lies not just in a commentary on the persecution of the Jews, but also in an invaluable warning for all who claim to be of Israel. Nephi understood this perfectly when he quoted Zenos (see vv. 18–19).

1 Nephi 19:21–24. Likening the Scriptures unto Ourselves

What scriptural source did Nephi use to teach his brothers concerning "the Lord their Redeemer"? (1 Nephi 19:23). What prophets' writings were found in that source? What did Nephi urge his readers to do with the scriptures he was citing? The wise reader learns from the lessons of the past.

Nephi said he read the scriptures to his people and did "liken all scriptures unto us" (v. 23). How does one liken the scriptures unto himself for his "profit and learning"? (v. 23). The following questions indicate possible ways this can be done:

What significance does this particular event or principle have for me today? For example, What does the rebellion of Laman and Lemuel teach me? What can I learn about faithfulness from Nephi's obedience?

If I were in this particular situation or faced with this challenge or question, how would I react? What flaws or strengths would I find in my own character? Am I like Lehi's family in the wilderness, or am I like Nephi? Do I complain when things get difficult, or do I trust in God no matter what the circumstances?

What do I learn about God and his dealings with his children from this event? Why does God put his children through the trials of the "wilderness"? Why did he send Lehi and his family to a whole new land? Why did God not just have them go to some isolated place until Jerusalem was destroyed?

As I study the lives of men and women in the scriptures, what do I learn about the things that please or displease God?

Why was this particular concept, principle, or event included in the scriptures?

1 Nephi 22:3–4. The Scattering of Israel

In 1 Nephi 22:3–4 Nephi speaks of the scattering of Israel among the nations of the earth. Sometimes the scattering of the people led to their being lost to history, such as with the ten tribes after the fall of the northern kingdom. Sometimes groups of Israelites were led away but maintained their identity as a group. Lehi's family is a good example of that aspect of the scattering.

Another way the scattering took place was for the people literally to be scattered among the nations of the world. The dispersion of the Jews after the fall of Jerusalem is an example of this kind of widespread scattering. This fact is supported by the following scriptural references: Deuteronomy 28:64, 30:1–3, Isaiah 11:11–12, Jeremiah 3:18, 31:8, Ezekiel 11:17–20, 36:19–24, Daniel 9:7, Hosea 8:8, Amos 9:9, 2 Nephi 10:20–22, 3 Nephi 16:4–5, 20:13, Ether 13:11, D&C 33:6, Moses 7:62.

1 Nephi 22:4. "The Isles of the Sea"

"According to a quotation by Reynolds and Sjodahl, 'Sir Isaac Newton observes that to the Hebrews the continents of Asia and Africa were "the earth," because they had access to them by land, while the parts of the earth to which they sailed over the sea were "the isles of the sea."' (*Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 1:214.)

"Thus, Nephi not only refers to the isles of the sea as the location of other remnants of the house of Israel, but he also indicates that he and his people were then living upon an 'isle of the sea' when he quite clearly is referring to the great land mass known as the American continent. (2 Nephi 10:20–21.)" (Ludlow, *Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 121).

1 Nephi 22:5–6. Nursed by the Gentiles

According to Nephi, the scattering and gathering of Israel are temporal matters (see 1 Nephi 22:6). In 1 Nephi 22:5–6, who was being scattered and gathered? Only the Jews? Read 1 Nephi 22:6 for Nephi's answer.

1 Nephi 22:6–9. “A Marvelous Work”

Nephi refers to “a marvelous work among the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 22:8) of the latter days. This great latter-day work includes the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the priesthood keys necessary to bring the covenants of God to “all the kindreds of the earth” (v. 9). This includes the Gentiles if they will accept it.

1 Nephi 22:10–12. “Make Bare His Arm”

Nephi speaks of God as making “bare his arm in the eyes of the nations” (1 Nephi 22:10; see also v. 11). This phrase is borrowed from Isaiah (see Isaiah 52:10) and means that God will show his power unto men. Why does Nephi say God will do this? (see 1 Nephi 22:11). What four things will result from this? (see v. 12). The first two results are temporal, and the last two are spiritual, just as Nephi indicated earlier (see v. 3).

1 Nephi 22:13–23. Destruction of the Church of the Devil

How will the church of the devil be destroyed? (see 1 Nephi 22:13). What will happen to those who fight against the restoration of the house of Israel? (see v. 14). In that day when Satan loses all his power over man, what will happen to the proud and wicked on the earth? (see v. 15). How will the righteous be preserved? (see vv. 16–19). Who is the great prophet who will cut off all the wicked? (see vv. 20–21).

1 Nephi 22:17. The Ultimate Triumph of God’s Work

“I would like you to know that in these, the last days, the Lord has predicted that there shall be two simultaneous movements. One of these movements is the great tribulation that shall come upon the world. The wicked will destroy the wicked.

“The other great movement which will be going forward simultaneously is that there shall be a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and it shall roll forth and eventually fill the whole earth. The Church to which you and I belong is that stone. It has been cut out of the mountain without hands, and your destiny and mine is to help roll it forth.

“Now do you suppose for one moment that the judgments of God are going to interfere with the progress of his work? He is consistent, isn’t he? Although he will pour out his tribulations upon the wicked, he nevertheless will carry forward his work,

and his people, under divine protection, will roll forth that stone until eventually it fills the whole earth.

“And so, says the Book of Mormon:

“For the time soon cometh that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous.

“Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it so be that the fulness of this wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, they shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire.’ (1 Nephi 22:16–17.)

“I believe that. In the midst of all these tribulations God will send fire from heaven, if necessary, to destroy our enemies while we carry forward our work and push that stone until it fills the whole earth!

“Your destiny is to do that very thing, and this is the kind of protection you will have. You do not need to fear about world conditions. You do not need to fear about anybody. Just serve the Lord and keep his commandments and build the Kingdom, and as you do so you will be protected in these last days” (Mark E. Petersen, in Conference Report, Oct. 1960, p. 82).

Points to Ponder

- Nephi cited the prophecies of Zenock, Neum, and Zenos (see 1 Nephi 19:10). These men were prophets who lived in Old Testament times, but their prophecies are not found in the Old Testament. Using the index as a resource, list several other prophecies that Zenock and Zenos made. What particular importance would their prophecies have to the Nephites? (see 3 Nephi 10:16).
- We live in a world of turmoil where the forces of Satan are warring against the Lord’s people. According to 1 Nephi 22:13, what is one reason that Satan’s host will not prevail over the people of God? What else will keep the righteous from being overpowered? (see vv. 14–17).
- What do 1 Nephi 22:15, 26 teach us about the way Satan will be bound? Can Satan be bound in his efforts to influence you? (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Chapter 7

2 Nephi 1–3

Introduction

The second book of Nephi begins with Lehi teaching and expressing the desires of his heart to his family. The eloquent and prophetic teachings of this great patriarch, who was soon to die, are evidence of his wisdom and the Spirit of the Lord that was with him.

Notes and Commentary

2 Nephi 1:1–4. The Dates of Lehi’s Journey

“The destruction of Jerusalem referred to in 2 Nephi 1:4 is recorded in the Bible in 2 Kings 25. Lehi and his group had been warned by the Lord to flee from the land of Jerusalem so that they would escape this destruction. Most biblical scholars date the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians somewhere between 586 B.C. and 590 B.C. Thus in his chronological footnotes in this section of the Book of Mormon, Brother [James E.] Talmage suggests that the events following Lehi’s vision of the destruction of Jerusalem took place sometime after about 588 B.C.” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 124).

2 Nephi 1:5–7. Inhabitants of the Promised Land

“The Lord in his scripture tells us that no one can come to this land [North and South America] unless he be brought or directed by the Spirit of the Lord, and so he has brought this people here. He brought the faith of the devoted Puritans of New England; he brought the patriotism of the Dutch at New York; he brought the gallantry of the cavaliers of Virginia; the light-hearted energy of the French of New Orleans. Just the kind of composite body of men to establish a government that could not be dominated by any particular race or tongue, but made composite, that all men might be welcomed to it, live under and enjoy its privileges” (Anthony W. Ivins, in Conference Report, Oct. 1932, p. 108).

2 Nephi 1:13–14. “From Whence No Traveler Can Return”

“Anti-Mormon critics claim that Joseph Smith received from Shakespeare the idea of referring to death as ‘the cold and silent grave, from whence no traveler can return.’ (2 Nephi 1:14.) Shakespeare’s

quotation, which critics say is too similar to the statement by Lehi, reads as follows: ‘But that the dread of something after death, The undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns.’ (*Hamlet*, Act 3, scene 1.) Such critics overlook other possibilities for the explanation of the similarity between this statement by Joseph Smith and the one by Shakespeare. In the first place, the idea of referring to death in such a manner is not unique to either of these men. In the book of Job in the Old Testament, we find such statements as: ‘Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death’ (Job 10:21), and ‘When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return’ (Job 16:22). Also, the Roman poet Catulus (who lived in the first century B.C.) included a similar thought in his ‘Elegy on a Sparrow’: ‘Now having passed the gloomy bourne/From whence he never can return.’” (Ludlow, *Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 124–25).

2 Nephi 1:15–20. Prophetic Promise for the Obedient

A look at the cross-references for 2 Nephi 1:20 reveals many other Book of Mormon references wherein the promise is repeated that those who keep the Lord’s commandments will prosper in the land. This appears to have been one of those prophetic utterances that was preserved in the hearts and the writings of the people from generation to generation. It is a promise that is still in force for the promised land (present-day North and South America). Those who are obedient will prosper both spiritually and temporally in the land.

2 Nephi 1:21–29. The Power of the Devil

Lehi made frequent reference to the power of the devil in his final blessing to Laman and Lemuel (see 2 Nephi 1:13, 17–18, 21, 23). Laman and Lemuel’s behavior indicates that Satan had a great hold over them. To say that they were bound with chains is an apt description of their awful plight. Nephi warned the Saints of the latter days in similar terms (see 2 Nephi 28:19–23).

2 Nephi 2:1–2. Great Blessings from Difficulties

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “We knew before we were born that we were coming to the earth

for bodies and experience and that we would have joys and sorrows, ease and pain, comforts and hardships, health and sickness, successes and disappointments, and we knew also that after a period of life we would die. We accepted all these eventualities with a glad heart, eager to accept both the favorable and unfavorable. We eagerly accepted the chance to come earthward even though it might be for only a day or a year. Perhaps we were not so much concerned whether we should die of disease, of accident, or of senility. We were willing to take life as it came and as we might organize and control it, and this without murmur, complaint, or unreasonable demands” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 106).

Elder Marion G. Romney taught the following about difficulties and afflictions:

“If we can bear our afflictions with the understanding, faith, and courage, . . . we shall be strengthened and comforted in many ways. We shall be spared the torment which accompanies the mistaken idea that all suffering comes as chastisement for transgression. . . .

“. . . I have seen the remorse and despair in the lives of men who, in the hour of trial, have cursed God and died spiritually. And I have seen people rise to great heights from what seemed to be unbearable burdens” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1969, pp. 59–60).

President Howard W. Hunter also testified:

“At various times in our lives, probably at repeated times in our lives, we do have to acknowledge that God knows what we do not know and sees what we do not see. ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord’ (Isaiah 55:8).

“If you have troubles at home with children who stray, if you suffer financial reverses and emotional strain that threaten your homes and your happiness, if you must face the loss of life or health, may peace be unto your soul. We will not be tempted beyond our ability to withstand. Our detours and disappointments are the straight and narrow path to Him, as we sing in one of our favorite hymns:

*“When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.*

(‘How Firm a Foundation,’ *Hymns* [1985], no. 85)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, p. 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, p. 60).

2 Nephi 2:3–7. Redeemed by Righteousness of the Savior

Lehi’s message in 2 Nephi 2:3–7 pertains to redemption, the means whereby the Savior brought salvation unto man. Lehi said that “salvation is free” (v. 4). In what sense is this true?

“We believe that through the sufferings, death, and atonement of Jesus Christ all mankind, without one exception, are to be completely and fully redeemed, both body and spirit, from the endless banishment and curse to which they were consigned by Adam’s transgression; and that this universal salvation and redemption of the whole human family from the endless penalty of the original sin, is effected without any conditions whatever on their part; that is, they are not required to believe or repent, or be baptized, or do anything else, in order to be redeemed from that penalty; for whether they believe or disbelieve, whether they repent or remain impenitent, whether they are baptized or unbaptized, whether they keep the commandments or break them, whether they are righteous or unrighteous, it will make no difference in relation to their redemption, both soul and body, from the penalty of Adam’s transgression. The most righteous man that ever lived on the earth, and the most wicked wretch of the whole human family, were both placed under the same curse without any transgression or agency of their own, and they both alike will be redeemed from that curse, without any agency or conditions on their part” (Orson Pratt, in James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, pp. 477–78).

Lehi told Jacob that he was redeemed “because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer” (2 Nephi 2:3), not for any act of Jacob’s but because of Jesus Christ. Lehi said, “the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free” (v. 4).

There is another way in which redemption comes to man. “Men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil” (v. 5), yet all men sin. Hence it is that “by the law no flesh is justified” (v. 5). To be justified means to stand uncondemned before the Lord. No man has ever done that by his own merits, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). No man keeps the law of God in perfection. Thus it is that Christ “offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law” (2 Nephi 2:7). Jesus stood in our place and received

the punishment due for all the broken laws of God in all the ages. But this aspect of salvation is not free in the strictest sense of the word, for there are things men must do to claim the benefits of salvation. Lehi says that salvation has value only for those “who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered” (v. 7). Men who would claim the benefits of Christ’s atoning act must exhibit faith in him sufficient to repent of all their sins. There is no other way to receive the full benefits of this redemptive act.

Elder James E. Talmage said: “The individual effect of the atonement makes it possible for any and every soul to obtain absolution from the effect of personal sins, through the mediation of Christ; but such saving intercession is to be invoked by individual effort as manifested through faith, repentance, and continued works of righteousness. The laws under which individual salvation is obtainable have been prescribed by Christ, whose right it is to say how the blessings made possible by His own sacrifice shall be administered. All men are in need of the Savior’s mediation, for all are transgressors. . . . That the blessing of redemption from individual sins, while open for all to attain, is nevertheless conditioned on individual effort, is as plainly declared as is the truth of unconditional redemption from death as an effect of the fall. There is a judgment ordained for all, and all will be judged ‘according to their works.’ The free agency of man enables him to choose or reject, to follow the path of life or the road that leads to destruction; therefore it is but just that he be held to answer for the exercise of his power of choice and that he meet the results of his acts” (*Articles of Faith*, pp. 89–90).

2 Nephi 2:11–16. Plan of Growth and Progress

The purpose served by “opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11) is that man might be tested to see if he will choose the good or the evil. He who desires good will do good, while he who desires evil will do evil.

“Evil is with us, it is that influence which tempts to sin, and which has been permitted to come into the world for the express purpose of giving us an opportunity of proving ourselves before God, before Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, before the holy angels, and before all good men, that we are determined to overcome the evil, and cleave to the good, for the Lord has given us the ability to do so” (Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 70).

“Man is on earth under a plan provided by God, the Father of the spirits of men. This plan is for the good and welfare of man. The ultimate purpose of the plan is to enable every person to develop his every power, and thus to progress eternally.

Imbedded in every part of the plan is the right of every man to act for himself, to choose one or the other of the opposites which present themselves before him. If he chooses to do that which is for his welfare, which enables him to progress, he chooses the good. If he chooses that which retards his progress, he chooses the evil. Whatever conforms to the plan of God for His earth children is good; whatever is in opposition to the plan is evil. That is a simple, plain definition of evil” (John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, pp. 205–6).

2 Nephi 2:22. No Death Before the Fall

“In the Book of Genesis [Genesis 2:7] we are told that Adam obtained his body from the dust of the earth, and that he was not subject to death is inferred in the commandment the Lord gave him, that if he transgressed the divine commandment and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he should surely die [Genesis 2:17]. In the Book of Mormon [2 Nephi 2:22] we are positively informed that Adam would have lived forever in the garden if he had not partaken of the forbidden fruit. So Adam was in no sense mortal until after his transgression. That his immortal spirit came from another world is verily true, just as it is true of each one of us, for we all lived in the spirit existence before we came into this world and obtained bodies which inherited mortality through the fall of Adam” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:6).

2 Nephi 2:22–25. The Fall and God’s Eternal Plan

If Adam and Eve had remained in innocence in the Garden of Eden, “they would have had no children” (2 Nephi 2:23). Also, they would not have experienced opposition as we know it, for there was no such condition in the idyllic state of the Garden of Eden (see vv. 22–23).

“It was the divine plan from the very beginning that man should be placed on the earth and be subject to mortal conditions and pass through a probationary state as explained in the Book of Mormon where he and his posterity would be subject to all mortal conditions. It was part of the divine plan that man should have this period of mortality where he would be shut out of the presence of God and be subject to all

the vicissitudes of mortality, the temptations and trials of the flesh, thus gaining experience and being placed in a position of trial, temptation, and be purified by passing through the trials and tribulations of the flesh, or mortality, as Paul has described it. This life is a very brief part of our existence, but is the most critical, for it is in mortality where we are tried and figuratively placed in the fire and tested, proved to see what kind of material we are made of, whether we will be worthy of an exaltation in the kingdom of God or be assigned to some other kingdom” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:81–82).

2 Nephi 2:26–27. “Free According to the Flesh”

“Men may choose the right or they may choose the wrong; they may walk in darkness or they may walk in the light. The Lord has given them, in the various dispensations of the world, the light of the gospel, wherein they could walk and not stumble, wherein they could find that peace and happiness which he desires, as a Loving Father, his children should enjoy, but the Lord does not take from them their free agency” (David O. McKay, “There Are Two Roads,” *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1964, p. 84).

2 Nephi 2:28–30. Power to Captivate Our Souls

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 181).

2 Nephi 3:1–25. Prophet of the Latter Days

“It was decreed in the counsels of eternity, long before the foundations of the earth were laid, that he, Joseph Smith, should be the man, in the last dispensation of this world, to bring forth the word of God to the people, and receive the fulness of the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God. The Lord had his eyes upon him, and upon his father, and upon his father’s father, and upon their progenitors clear back to Abraham, and from Abraham to the flood, from the flood to Enoch, and from Enoch to Adam. He has watched that family and that blood as it has circulated from its fountain to the birth of that man. He was fore-ordained in eternity to preside over this last dispensation” (Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 108).

2 Nephi 3:12. “Shall Grow Together”

This phrase denotes an ongoing process pertaining to the coming forth of the stick of Judah and the stick of Ephraim (see Ezekiel 37:15–20).

Concerning the coming forth of the new Latter-day Saint editions of the scriptures, Elder Boyd K. Packer stated:

“The stick or record of Judah—The Old Testament and the New Testament—and the stick or record of Ephraim—The Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ—are now woven together in such a way that as you pore over one you are drawn to the other; as you learn from one you are enlightened by the other. They are indeed one in our hands. Ezekiel’s prophecy now stands fulfilled” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 53).

Points to Ponder

- What must be the attitude and condition of all who desire the benefits of the redemptive power of the Messiah? (see 2 Nephi 2:7). What else must we do to be saved from the power of the adversary and to obtain eternal life? (see vv. 26–29).
- What is the most important reason for mortality? (see v. 25). How is this obtained? (see 2 Nephi 9:18).
- What was Lehi trying to do in 2 Nephi 1–3? What does this tell you about the role of a father and one of the important things a father can do to fulfill this role?

Chapter 8

2 Nephi 4–7

Introduction

Despite Lehi’s efforts to give final blessings and admonitions to his family, hatred and jealousy divided them. The followers of Laman were a wicked and idle people cursed by the Lord. Nephi’s followers were industrious and happy because of their righteousness.

Notes and Commentary

2 Nephi 4:1–2. The Prophecies of Joseph

“Nephi mentions the prophecies of Joseph that were written on the brass plates of Laban, and, he concludes, ‘there are not many greater.’ (2 Nephi 4:2.) But where are these great prophecies of Joseph? Why do they not appear in the Old Testament? We do not know the answers to these questions, but the following observations might give some clues as to possible answers.

“In the first place, Joseph’s prophecies would logically be written most completely on the ‘stick’ or record of Joseph; thus, they were probably included in detail on the brass plates of Laban. However, Joseph’s prophecies are not found presently in the ‘stick’ or record of Judah—the Bible. Again, this would indicate that the records on the brass plates of Laban were more comprehensive and complete than the records from which we get our Old Testament.

“In the second place, evidently some of the writings of Joseph are still in existence but have not been published to the world. Joseph Smith said that he received some papyri scrolls that contained the record of Abraham and Joseph at the same time he obtained the Egyptian mummies from Michael Chandler. Concerning this record, Joseph Smith has written: ‘The record of Abraham and Joseph, found with the mummies, is beautifully written on papyrus, with black, and a small part red, ink or paint, in perfect preservation.’ (*History of the Church*, 2:348.) The Prophet next describes how the mummies and the record came into his possession and then concludes: ‘Thus I have given a brief history of the manner in which the writings of the fathers, Abraham and Joseph, have been preserved, and how I came in possession of the same—a correct translation of which I shall give in its proper place.’ (Ibid., 2:350–51.)

“The record of Abraham translated by the Prophet was subsequently printed, and it is now known as the book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. However, the translation of the book of Joseph has not yet been published. Evidently the record of Joseph was translated by the Prophet, but perhaps the reason it was not published was because the great prophecies therein were ‘too great’ for the people of this day” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 130–31).

It should be remembered that some of Joseph’s prophecies were restored to the Bible when Joseph Smith translated or revised it (see JST, Genesis 50:24–36).

2 Nephi 4:3–14. A Father’s Blessing

Like Jacob of old (see Genesis 49), Lehi felt impelled to warn and bless his children before he passed through the veil of death. Approaching death often causes the “solemnities of eternity” (D&C 43:34) to rest upon the mind.

2 Nephi 4:15–35. The Psalm of Nephi

The verses found in 2 Nephi 4:15–35 are frequently referred to as the psalm of Nephi. The psalms of ancient Israel were hymns. They were collected and used very early in Israel’s history, and some of them were recited quite often. Most of these were familiar to the Israelites.

These psalms served to express the religious feeling of ancient Israel at its greatest depth and highest intensity. Nephi would be familiar with the psalm form as well as with many of the psalms in the Old Testament. It would be natural for him to “write the things of [his soul]” (v. 15) and the expressions of his joy and his sorrow in this highly beautiful, poetic form. An individual can experience more of what Nephi possibly intended by reading this passage aloud, trying to feel as Nephi must have felt as he wrote it, rather than trying to see whether or not the passage has the elements of good English poetry.

Sidney B. Sperry noted: “This is a true psalm in both form and idea. Its rhythm is comparable to the noble cadence of David’s poems. It not only praises God, but lays bare to us the very depths of Nephi’s soul. A study of this psalm reveals how the scriptures

delighted Nephi. The influence upon him of the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and the Psalms is very apparent” (*Our Book of Mormon*, p. 111).

But more important than the form of this passage is the content. Throughout this section of the Book of Mormon we have noted again and again Nephi’s great righteousness, his faithfulness in tribulation, and his overpowering dedication to God. Yet, like all of us, Nephi keenly sensed his imperfections and weaknesses, and he was moved to exclaim:

“O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

“I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me” (2 Nephi 4:17–18).

Was Nephi really that beset with sins? The answer would seem to lie in the following statement by Joseph Smith:

“The nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with Him” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 51).

2 Nephi 5:6. Nephi’s Sisters

“This is the only specific reference in the Book of Mormon that Nephi had sisters as well as brothers. How many sisters there were, whether they were older or younger than Nephi, or what their names may have been are questions not answered in our present Book of Mormon. However, the following statement by Erastus Snow may provide information on some of the sisters of Nephi:

“The Prophet Joseph informed us that the record of Lehi, was contained on the 116 pages that were first translated and subsequently stolen, and of which an abridgment is given us in the first Book of Nephi, which is the record of Nephi individually, he himself being of the lineage of Manasseh; but that Ishmael was of the lineage of Ephraim, and that his sons married into Lehi’s family, and Lehi’s sons married Ishmael’s daughters. . . .” (*Journal of Discourses*, 23:184.)

“The words that Ishmael’s sons ‘married into Lehi’s family’ would seem to indicate that the two sons of Ishmael (see 1 Nephi 7:6) were married to

Lehi’s daughters (and thus to two of the sisters of Nephi). However, the sisters referred to in 2 Nephi 5:6 are evidently still other sisters, because the sisters mentioned here follow Nephi when the schism with Laman occurs, whereas the sisters of Nephi who were married to the sons of Ishmael evidently stayed with their husbands and joined with Laman. (See Alma 3:7 and 47:35.)” (Ludlow, *Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 131–32).

2 Nephi 5:16. A Temple Like Solomon’s

“Solomon’s temple was only a small building measuring about 90 feet in length and 30 feet in width and height. Hence, it was not larger than many of our meetinghouses. But the children of Israel were proud of their temple because of the very costly ornaments with which it was embellished. . . .

“Many of you brethren who are comfortably fixed financially, could, single handed, build a temple like Solomon’s temple with your own means. You might be obliged to follow the example of Nephi in not furnishing the building with so much silver and gold or so many precious things as did Solomon, but I venture to say that it was quite possible for a small number of Nephites to erect a temple as large as that erected by Solomon, omitting the costly ornamentations” (Andrew Jenson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1923, pp. 126, 128).

2 Nephi 5:17–25. A Ruler and a Teacher

How did Nephi view his position as king? What words did he use instead of king? (see 2 Nephi 5:19; see also 1 Nephi 2:22, 1 Corinthians 12:28).

2 Nephi 5:26. The Priesthood Held by Lehi

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

“The Nephites were descendants of Joseph. Lehi discovered this when reading the brass plates. He was a descendant of Manasseh, and Ishmael, who accompanied him with his family, was of the tribe of Ephraim. Therefore there were no Levites who accompanied Lehi to the Western Hemisphere. Under these conditions the Nephites officiated by virtue of the Melchizedek Priesthood from the days of Lehi to the days of the appearance of our Savior among them. It is true that Nephi ‘consecrated Jacob and Joseph’ that they should be priests and teachers over the land of the Nephites, but the fact that plural terms *priests and teachers* were used indicates that this was not a reference to the definite office in the priesthood in either case, but it was a general assignment to teach, direct, and admonish the people. Otherwise the terms

priest and teacher would have been given, in the singular. . . .

“From these and numerous other passages we learn that it was by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood that the Nephites administered from the time they left Jerusalem until the time of the coming of Jesus Christ” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:124–26).

2 Nephi 6:3–5. The Words of Isaiah

What reasons did Jacob give to his people for quoting Isaiah? Why would Nephi want Jacob to speak about Isaiah’s writings? (see 2 Nephi 11:2–3). “Likened unto you, for ye are of the house of Israel” (2 Nephi 6:5) means that Isaiah speaks not only to his own people, but also to the Saints of our day, for we also are of Israel.

2 Nephi 6:6. A Standard to the World

“This Church is the standard which Isaiah said the Lord would set up for the people in the latter days. This Church was given to be a light to the world and to be a standard for God’s people and for the Gentiles to seek to. This Church is the ensign on the mountain spoken of by the Old Testament prophets. It is the way, the truth, and the life” (Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1961, p. 119).

2 Nephi 6:12–13. “Covenant People of the Lord”

Jacob makes three important points in 2 Nephi 6:12–13. He explains what conditions must be met in order for the Gentiles to be saved by the Lord. Jacob explains the cause for which Isaiah wrote, and then points out the end result coming to those who oppose and fight against “the covenant people of the Lord” (v. 13). Obviously the phrase “lick up the dust of their feet” (v. 13) is a figurative expression.

2 Nephi 6:14. The Jews Are “Beginning to Believe”

“Not many of the Jews, I take it from my reading of the scriptures, will believe in Christ before he comes. The Book of Mormon tells us that they shall begin to believe in him [see 2 Nephi 30:7]. They are now beginning to believe in him. The Jews today look upon Christ as a great Rabbi. They have accepted him as one of their great teachers; they have said that, ‘He is Jew of Jew, the greatest Rabbi of them all,’ as one has stated it. When the gospel was restored in 1830, if a Jew had mentioned the name of Christ in one of the synagogues, he would have been rebuked. Had a rabbi referred to him, the congregation would have arisen and left the building. And so, we see the sentiment has

changed. Now I state this on Jewish authority that they are beginning to believe in Christ, and some of them are accepting the gospel.

“But in the main they will gather to Jerusalem in their unbelief; the gospel will be preached to them; some of them will believe. Not all of the Gentiles have believed when the gospel has been proclaimed to them, but the great body of the Jews who are there assembled will not receive Christ as their Redeemer until he comes himself and makes himself manifest unto them” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:9).

2 Nephi 6:14–15. The Messiah to Manifest Himself Again to the Jews

“Zechariah is another prophet who has plainly spoken of these great events. According to his predictions the nations will gather and lay siege to Jerusalem. Part of the city will fall, with dire consequences to its inhabitants, when a great earthquake will come, the Mount of Olives will cleave in twain, and the persecuted people will flee into this valley for safety. At that particular time will the Savior come as their Deliverer and show them his hands and his feet. They will look upon him and ask him where he received his wounds, and he will tell them they were received in the house of his friends—he is Jesus Christ, their Redeemer. Then will they fall to the ground and mourn, every family apart, because their ancestors persecuted their King and the children have followed in the footsteps of the fathers.

“At that time shall come the redemption of the Jews. Jerusalem shall then be rebuilt and the promises that it shall become a holy city will be fulfilled. The punishment which shall come upon those who lay siege to this land will be their destruction. The prophets have portrayed this in much detail with all its horrors” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:47).

Points to Ponder

▪ Why do you think Nephi delighted in the scriptures? What is it that brings a person to the point that they love and cherish the scriptures? Consider the following statement as you ponder these questions:

“I think that people who study the scriptures get a dimension to their life that nobody else gets and that can’t be gained in any way except by studying the scriptures.

“There’s an increase in faith and a desire to do what’s right and a feeling of inspiration and understanding that comes to people who study the

gospel—meaning particularly the Standard Works—and who ponder the principles, that can't come in any other way" (Bruce R. McConkie, in David Croft, "Spare Time's Rare to Apostle," *Church News*, 24 Jan. 1976, p. 4).

What important things do 2 Nephi 4:15–16 and 2 Nephi 31:20 teach that you can do to help gain eternal life?

- President Gordon B. Hinckley taught that we can triumph over evil influences in life by disciplining ourselves to avoid them (see Conference Report, Apr. 1983, p. 66; or *Ensign*, May 1983, pp. 46–47). What is the relationship between that idea and the ones expressed by Nephi in 2 Nephi 4:28 and the Lord in Matthew 4:10?
- Under what conditions will the Lord bless us with what we ask for in our prayers? (see 2 Nephi 4:35, 3 Nephi 18:20, D&C 46:30).
- Review the following scriptures concerning the writings of Isaiah: 2 Nephi 6:4–5, 25:1–8, 3 Nephi 23:1–3. Why was Isaiah quoted so much in the Book of Mormon? Who did he speak to? Why is it important for us to know and understand the words of Isaiah?

Chapter 9

2 Nephi 8–10

Introduction

Jacob, a son of Lehi and a brother of Nephi, was a great spiritual leader of the Nephites. 2 Nephi 8–10 gives a continuation of Jacob’s teachings to the Nephites. He quoted and explained prophecies of Isaiah about the latter-day gathering and redemption of Israel. He taught of the greatness of the Redeemer and the power of his atonement, and entreated the Nephites to repent so they might partake of the Lord’s saving grace.

Notes and Commentary

2 Nephi 8:4–8. “My” and “Mine”

In 2 Nephi 8:4–8 emphasis is placed upon the pronouns *my* and *mine*. The Lord is referring to himself. It is his righteousness, his law, and his salvation that shall prevail. Men who understand and accept this fact need not fear the “reproach of men” nor “be . . . afraid of their revilings” (v. 7). God is stronger than all of this.

2 Nephi 8:9–11. A Plea to the Lord

The verses found in 2 Nephi 8:9–11 appear to be a plea from the people of God for the Lord to “awake as in the ancient days” (v. 9) and act in their behalf as he did against ancient Rahab (Egypt) and the dragon (devil). It was the Lord who parted the Red Sea for the children of Israel and made a way for them to pass over (see v. 10). In that same way he will gather his children in the latter days from throughout the earth and will bring them to Zion where there shall be gladness and everlasting joy.

2 Nephi 8:12–16. Trust the Lord

The appeal in 2 Nephi 8:12–16 is to trust the Lord rather than man. The Lord is our creator, a being of great power. Why should we not fear man? (see vv. 12–13). The captive exiles of Israel will be freed by God’s power, for they are truly his people, and he has them “covered . . . in the shadow” (v. 16) of his hand (see also vv. 14–15).

2 Nephi 8:17–18. Awake and Rise Again

Following the crucifixion of Jesus, the Romans removed the Jews from Jerusalem and scattered them abroad throughout the empire. For almost two

thousand years Jerusalem was not under the political control of the Jews. She had, in fact, drunk the dregs of a bitter cup of medicine. There was not a single prophet-son to guide her during all those years. Now it is time for Jerusalem, representing the ancient Jewish nation, to awake and rise again and return to their God, the Holy One of Israel.

2 Nephi 8:19–20. Two Prophets to be Raised Up

The allusion in 2 Nephi 8:19–20 seems to be to the two prophets who will be raised up unto the Jewish nation in the latter days. These prophets will enjoy enormous powers during a critical period when Jerusalem is under siege (see Revelation 11:1–17). They will also “prophesy to the Jews after they are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem in the land of their fathers” (D&C 77:15). The other “sons” have been vanquished, but these two are like “a wild bull in a net, . . . full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God” (2 Nephi 8:20).

2 Nephi 8:21–25. Jerusalem to Prevail

Through the power of the Lord, Jerusalem shall prevail. God has removed the “cup of trembling” (2 Nephi 8:22) as he promised he would do. The period of Jerusalem’s rejection is over. She will never have to suffer banishment and destruction again. It is now the enemy’s turn to suffer. The cup of suffering will now be given to those who have caused the Jews so much suffering (see D&C 113:9–10).

2 Nephi 9:4–6. “Death . . . Important in the Welfare of Man”

“Death is just as important in the welfare of man as is birth. There is no greater blessing that can come than the blessing of birth. One third of the hosts of heaven, because of rebellion, were denied that privilege, and hence they have no bodies of flesh and bones, that great gift of God.

“But who would like to live forever in this mundane world, filled with pain, decay, sorrow, and tribulation, and grow old and infirm and yet have to remain with all the vicissitudes of mortality? I think all of us would come to the conclusion, if that proposition were placed before us, that we would not like to have it. We would reject it. We would not want life of that nature. Life here in this world is short of necessity, and

yet all that is required may be accomplished, but death is just as important in the plan of salvation as birth is. We have to die—it is essential—and death comes into the world ‘to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator.’” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:116).

2 Nephi 9:7–12. “An Infinite Atonement”

Jacob very clearly explains in 2 Nephi 9:7–12 what would have happened to us if there had been no atoning sacrifice to bring about redemption from sin and resurrection from death. Because all men sin in this life (see Romans 3:23) and because no unclean thing can dwell in the presence of God (see Moses 6:57), when a person dies his spirit would be in a state of uncleanness forever. This would put man under the power and dominion of Satan. As Jacob says, “Our spirits must have become like unto him” (2 Nephi 9:9).

“The fall brought death. That is not a desirable condition. We do not want to be banished from the presence of God. We do not want to be subject forever to mortal conditions. We do not want to die and have our bodies turn to dust, and the spirits that possess these bodies by right, turned over to the realm of Satan and become subject to him.

“But that was the condition; and if Christ had not come as the atoning sacrifice, in demand of the law of justice, to *repair* or to *atone* or to *redeem* us from the condition that Adam found himself in, and that we find ourselves in; then mortal death would have come; the body would have gone back to the dust from where it came; the spirit would have gone into the realms of Satan’s domain, and have been subject to him forever” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:122).

2 Nephi 9:13–16. The Reality of the Judgment

When Adam transgressed the commandment in the Garden of Eden and brought about the fall of man, two kinds of death were introduced into the world: physical death, which is the separation of the body and the spirit, and spiritual death, which is separation or alienation from God. Because both conditions come automatically upon all men through no act of their own, it is only just that they be taken care of without condition or price.

Physical death is automatically overcome for all men by Christ through the Resurrection, wherein the body and the spirit are reunited, never to be separated again. Something that is not so well understood, however, is that the Resurrection also automatically

brings all men back into the presence of God, or overcomes the state of spiritual death caused by the fall of Adam. Thus all the effects of the fall of Adam are overcome automatically without condition.

In the case of spiritual death, however, we must remember that our state of being separated from God in mortality is only partially due to Adam’s transgression. We are born mortal, away from the presence of God, because of the Fall. But once we become accountable and yield to temptation we are responsible for our own state of uncleanness. In other words, we are then to blame for maintaining our state of alienation or spiritual death. If we will turn to God and accept the sacrifice of his Son before the Judgment, then we can be “clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness” (2 Nephi 9:14) through the redemptive power of the Savior. In other words, the spiritual death caused by our own fall will also be overcome in Christ, and we can dwell with God forever. But everyone will be brought back into God’s presence (see vv. 13–15). Everyone will have their state of spiritual death caused by Adam’s fall temporarily overcome. For those who refuse to come unto Christ, their state of spiritual death or separation from God will be overcome only long enough to bring them into his presence for judgment. Then they will be banished from his glory and presence because of their refusal to repent.

The idea that at the time of judgment we will have a perfect remembrance of our righteousness or our unrighteousness is also taught by Alma. Alma describes the awful shame that will grip all those who have not repented of their sins (see Alma 12:13–15).

2 Nephi 9:17–24. God’s Goodness and Greatness

In 2 Nephi 9 Jacob approaches each of his subjects in an interesting way, always in terms of God’s goodness and greatness. For instance, verse 8 begins, “O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace!” Verse 10 begins, “O how great the goodness of our God.” Look also at verses 13, 17, 19, and 20. Each item Jacob mentions is an attribute of God—God is full of wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, and holiness.

Speaking of these and other attributes of God, the Prophet Joseph Smith said: “By a little reflection it will be seen that the idea of the existence of these attributes in the Deity is necessary to enable any rational being to exercise faith in him; for without the idea of the existence of these attributes in the Deity men could not exercise faith in him for life and salvation; seeing that without the knowledge of all

things, God would not be able to save any portion of his creatures; for it is by reason of the knowledge which he has of all things, from the beginning to the end, that enables him to give that understanding to his creatures by which they are made partakers of eternal life; and if it were not for the idea existing in the minds of men that God had all knowledge it would be impossible for them to exercise faith in him” (*Lectures on Faith* 4:11).

2 Nephi 9:25–39. “No Law Given . . . No Punishment”

“According to the technical definition of sin it consists in the violation of law, and in this strict sense sin may be committed inadvertently or in ignorance. It is plain, however, from the scriptural doctrine of human responsibility and the unerring justice of God, that in his transgressions as in his righteous deeds man will be judged according to his ability to comprehend and obey law. To him who has never been made acquainted with a higher law the requirements of that law do not apply in their fulness. For sins committed without knowledge—that is, for laws violated in ignorance—a propitiation has been provided in the atonement wrought through the sacrifice of the Savior; and sinners of this class do not stand condemned, but shall be given opportunity yet to learn and to accept or reject the principles of the Gospel” (James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, p. 58).

2 Nephi 9:44–49. “Prepare . . . for That Glorious Day . . . of Judgment”

“Man sleeps the sleep of death, but the spirit lives where the record of his deeds is kept—that does not die—man cannot kill it; there is no decay associated with it, and it still retains in all its vividness the remembrance of that which transpired before the separation by death of the body and the ever-living spirit. Man sleeps for a time in the grave, and by-and-by he rises again from the dead and goes to judgment; and then the secret thoughts of all men are revealed before Him with whom we have to do; we cannot hide them; it would be in vain for a man to say then, I did not do so-and-so; the command would be, Unravel and read the record which he has made of himself, and let it testify in relation to these things, and all could gaze upon it. If a man has acted fraudulently against his neighbor—has committed murder, or adultery, or anything else, and wants to cover it up, that record will stare him in the face, he tells the story himself, and bears witness against himself. . . . It is not because somebody has seen things, or heard anything by which

a man will be judged and condemned, but it is because that record that is written by the man himself in the tablets of his own mind—that record that cannot lie—will in that day be unfolded before God and angels, and those who shall sit as judges” (John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:78–79).

2 Nephi 10:3. A Corrupt Generation

“This generation is as corrupt as the generation of the Jews that crucified Christ; and if He were here today, and should preach the same doctrine He did then, they would put Him to death” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 328).

2 Nephi 10:7–9. Historic Successor of the Hebrew Prophets

Morris Jastrow, Jr., a Jew, said:

“From the historic point of view Jesus is to be regarded as a direct successor of the Hebrew prophets. His teachings are synonymous with the highest spiritual aspirations of the human race. Like the prophets, He lays the chief stress upon pure conduct and moral ideas, but He goes beyond the prophets in His absolute indifference to theological speculations and religious rites. It has been commonly said that the Jews rejected Jesus. They did so in the sense in which they rejected the teachings of the earlier prophets” (in Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Signs of the Times*, p. 62).

Points to Ponder

- Through the atonement of Christ we can be redeemed from both physical and spiritual death. What does each of these terms mean? What must we do to be redeemed from spiritual death? (see 2 Nephi 9:10–12, 21, 45–46; 10:23–24).
- Why will the Judgment be perfectly just? Where is the evidence gathered from by which we will be judged? (see 2 Nephi 9:13–16, Alma 41).
- What do the scriptures teach about the omniscience (infinite or complete knowledge) of God? (see 2 Nephi 9:20, Alma 26:35, D&C 38:1–2).
- Under what conditions is learning good or bad? (see 2 Nephi 9:28–29, 42).
- Jacob taught that the Jews would eventually return to the “lands of their inheritance” (2 Nephi 10:7). What will happen among them to bring about that restoration? (see vv. 3–8).
- What promise did the Lord make to the latter-day Gentiles on the land of America? (see vv. 10–18).

Chapter 10

2 Nephi 11–16

Introduction

Nephi loved and quoted extensively from the writings of Isaiah, who preceded him by over a century. Isaiah’s message is vital to all, but especially to those who live in the latter days, for they will live through the fulfillment of his words. It is significant to remember that Isaiah’s name means “Jehovah is salvation” and that central to Isaiah’s entire message is the life, mission, and glorious atonement of Jesus Christ.

Notes and Commentary

2 Nephi 11:2–8. The Writings of Isaiah

The verses found in 2 Nephi 11:2–8 are an introduction to more of the writings of Isaiah. Nephi makes several important points in these verses.

Together with Isaiah and Jacob, Nephi bore witness to the reality of the Redeemer (see vv. 2–3). The importance of these three witnesses is explained by Daniel H. Ludlow:

“God has said through his prophets, ‘In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.’ (2 Corinthians 13:1.) Nephi was apparently aware of this system of witnesses when he introduced three great pre-Christian witnesses of the coming of Jesus Christ: Isaiah, Nephi himself, and Nephi’s brother Jacob. Nephi then continues: ‘Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word.’ (2 Nephi 11:3.)” (*A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 140).

Nephi quoted Isaiah because he delighted in “proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ” (2 Nephi 11:4). This provides an important insight into the particular passages Nephi chose to quote. Scholars call such passages “messianic” because they center on the Messiah. Watching for such messianic meanings helps an individual better understand Isaiah.

Nephi taught that the law of Moses and many other things were given by God to typify Christ. The word *type* has a peculiar scriptural meaning. It means that an object or event carries symbolic significance as well as a literal meaning. Thus, Alma says that the

Liahona was a type (shadow or symbol) of how one comes to the true promised land (see Alma 37:38–47). To find out how profoundly symbolic the law of Moses was, see Mosiah 3:14–15, 13:29–31, Alma 25:15–16, 34:14, and Galatians 3:21–24.

Nephi quoted Isaiah for at least three major reasons: Nephi delighted in the words of Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 11:2), the words of Isaiah prove the truthfulness of the coming of Christ (see vv. 4, 6), and Nephi felt that readers “may lift up their hearts and rejoice” (v. 8) because of Isaiah’s words.

2 Nephi 12:1–4. “The Mountain of the Lord’s House”

The word *mountain* is used in the scriptures in different allegorical or figurative senses. In 2 Nephi 12:1–4 the word *mountain* refers to a high place of God, a place of revelation, even the temple of the Lord.

“This temple [Salt Lake Temple] on this temple block is that house of the God of Jacob that our pioneer fathers started to build when they were a thousand miles from transportation, and it took them forty years to build it” (LeGrand Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, p. 77; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, p. 51).

2 Nephi 12:5–22. Trust Not in Idols

The verses found in 2 Nephi 12:5–22 reprove the people of the Lord for their trust in idols, “the work of their own hands” (v. 8). As a result of this idol worship, God will humble the “lofty looks of man” (v. 11) and the “haughtiness of men . . . [for] the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day” (v. 17).

2 Nephi 13:1–11. Punished as a Result of Wickedness

Isaiah foresaw that Judah and Jerusalem would be punished by the Lord as a result of their wickedness. In 587 B.C. the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and Judah was taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. In A.D. 70, 657 years later, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and scattered the Jews to various portions of the world. Surely they had, as Isaiah said, “rewarded evil unto themselves” (2 Nephi 13:9).

2 Nephi 13:12. “Undermining of the Home and Family”

Elder Ezra Taft Benson saw the prophecy in 2 Nephi 13:12 as having a fulfillment in our own day:

“And so today, the undermining of the home and family is on the increase, with the devil anxiously working to displace the father as the head of the home and create rebellion among the children. The Book of Mormon describes this condition when it states, ‘And my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.’ And then these words follow—and consider these words seriously when you think of those political leaders who are promoting birth control and abortion: ‘O my people, they who lead thee cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths.’ (2 Ne. 13:12.)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, p. 21).

2 Nephi 15:26–30. The Time of the Great Gathering

“In fixing the time of the great gathering, Isaiah seemed to indicate that it would take place in the day of the railroad train and the airplane: [Isaiah 5:26–29.]

“Since there were neither trains nor airplanes in that day, Isaiah could hardly have mentioned them by name. However, he seems to have described them in unmistakable words. How better could ‘their horses’ hoofs be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind’ than in the modern train? How better could ‘their roaring . . . be like a lion’ than in the roar of the airplane? Trains and airplanes do not stop for night. Therefore, was not Isaiah justified in saying: ‘none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken’? With this manner of transportation the Lord can really ‘hiss unto them from the end of the earth,’ that ‘they shall come with speed swiftly.’ Indicating that Isaiah must have foreseen the airplane, he stated: ‘Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?’ (Isaiah 60:8.)” (LeGrand Richards, *Israel! Do You Know?*, p. 182).

2 Nephi 16:1–2. Seraphim

“*Seraphs* are angels who reside in the presence of God, giving continual glory, honor, and adoration to him. . . .

“The fact that these holy beings were shown to him [Isaiah] as having wings was simply to symbolize their ‘power, to move, to act, etc.’ as was the case also in visions others had received. (D. & C. 77:4.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 702–3).

Points to Ponder

- Notice footnote *a* for 2 Nephi 11:8. There are many helps to understanding Isaiah that are given in the Bible that are not repeated in the notes for the chapters of Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon. Study the notes in the Bible as you read the quotations of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon. Write in the margins of your Book of Mormon notes that are especially helpful to you.
- To help you understand the teachings of Isaiah in 2 Nephi 12–16, study the summary at the beginning of each chapter. Write in your Book of Mormon or on a separate piece of paper the verses you think are covered by each heading.
- Compare 2 Nephi 16:9–10 with Matthew 13:10–16 and Acts 28:25–27. How do people hear and yet not hear, and see, yet not see? How must we understand if we are to be converted and healed? (see 2 Nephi 16:10).

Chapter 11

2 Nephi 17–24

Introduction

Nephi used the prophecies of Isaiah to teach his people of the need to rely upon the Lord and look to him who would preserve them. Isaiah’s prophecies of the coming of the Messiah in the lineage of Judah were an assurance that their nation would not be totally destroyed, though they would suffer because of their sins. As the Lord would punish the nations of Assyria and Babylon for opposing his people, he would also overthrow all the wicked in the end and would establish Zion.

Notes and Commentary

2 Nephi 17:16–24. Prophecy Against Israel

The prophecy in 2 Nephi 17:16–24 seems to be a prophecy against the kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) declaring that the confederacy between Ephraim and Syria would be broken: “The land that thou abhorrest [the northern kingdom of Israel] shall be forsaken of both her kings [Ephraim’s and Syria’s]” (v. 16); “with arrows and with bows shall men come thither” (v. 24). This prophecy was fulfilled when Assyria overran the land in 721 B.C.

2 Nephi 18:1–12, 18. Symbolic Names

Isaiah was the father of two sons, Maher-shalal-hash-baz (see 2 Nephi 18:3) and Shear-jashub (see 2 Nephi 17:3). Both names are symbolic of the Lord’s intentions for the northern kingdom of Israel. Maher-shalal-hash-baz is a Hebrew term meaning “to speed to the spoil, he hasteneth the prey” (Isaiah 8:1*d*; see also 2 Nephi 18:1*b*). This name describes the events spoken of in 2 Nephi 18:4. The ten tribes were overrun and despoiled by the Assyrians when Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, was besieged. Shear-jashub is a Hebrew term meaning “the remnant shall return” (Isaiah 7:3*a*). This is a reference to the day when Israel will be gathered from her scattered condition. Thus Isaiah could report: “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts” (2 Nephi 18:18).

2 Nephi 18:13–22. A Sanctuary or a “Stone of Stumbling”

The prophecy in 2 Nephi 18:13–22 is messianic in nature (see also Jacob 4:14–17). Because of their

rejection of the Messiah, Isaiah prophesied that the Jewish nation would inherit “trouble, and darkness, [and] dimness of anguish” (2 Nephi 18:22).

2 Nephi 19:1–7. Titles of the Messiah

Isaiah’s messianic prophecy continues in 2 Nephi 19:1–7. Israel, who sat in darkness, would see “a great light” (v. 2) when Jesus came to earth and broke the yoke of Israel’s spiritual burden (see v. 4).

The titles given to the Messiah in verse 6 signify his service to mankind. He is the wonder of the ages and a counselor in the ways of eternal life (see Jacob 4:10). He who was born in a lowly manger is Jehovah, the “Mighty God” (2 Nephi 19:6) of Israel come to earth. Those who have faith in Christ and covenant with the Lord in the waters of baptism become his children and he becomes their “Everlasting Father” (v. 6, see also Mosiah 5:7). When the Messiah was born, the angels sang “peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14) because the “Prince of Peace” (2 Nephi 19:6), even “the founder of peace” (Mosiah 15:18), had come to earth. His government and peace will last forever.

2 Nephi 19:8–21. “His Hand . . . Stretched Out Still”

Isaiah prophesied that Israel would refuse to heed the Lord. Yet, in spite of Israel’s rejection of the Lord, “his hand is stretched out still” (2 Nephi 19:12, 17, 21).

2 Nephi 20:1–19. Boasting Against the Lord

The Lord said that Israel’s wickedness would cause him to send Assyria, “the rod of [his] anger” (2 Nephi 20:5), against his people “to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets” (v. 6). This prophecy was literally fulfilled when Assyria captured the northern kingdom of Israel and took the people captive to Assyria.

This prophecy further revealed that when Assyria became lifted up in pride the Lord would “punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks” (v. 12). The Lord made it clear that even though Assyria accomplished his purposes against Israel, they had no reason to be proud. As the ax cannot boast of itself against the one who uses it, so the Assyrians could not think of

themselves as being higher than the Lord (see v. 15). Assyria was but an instrument in the hand of the Lord in fulfilling his purposes.

2 Nephi 20:20–34. Return and “Overflow with Righteousness”

Isaiah’s prophecy continues in 2 Nephi 20:20–34. When “the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob” (v. 20) have learned to trust the Lord rather than man, they “shall return” and “overflow with righteousness” (v. 22). The Lord urged his people to “be not afraid of the Assyrian” (v. 24) for their captivity would not last forever; “for yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease” (v. 25). At that time the Lord would remove the Assyrian burden from the shoulders of Israel (see v. 27), and “the high ones of stature shall be hewn down; and the haughty shall be humbled” (v. 33).

We live in the days of the fulfillment of this prophecy. Faithful Latter-day Saints are part of that remnant of Jacob who are trusting in the Lord and starting to overflow with righteousness. We should have cause to ponder when we realize that we are part of the fulfillment of a prophecy uttered seven hundred years before Christ—over twenty-six hundred years ago!

2 Nephi 21:1–5. “A Rod Out of the Stem of Jesse”

When Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith on 21 September 1823, “he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled” (Joseph Smith—History 1:40). Nephi quoted the same chapter of Isaiah in 2 Nephi 21. Who is the stem of Jesse and who is the rod to come forth out of that stem? The Lord answered these questions in Doctrine and Covenants 113:1–4. Still, careful reading and pondering are needed to decide who is meant by each symbolic term.

2 Nephi 21:6–9. Peace through Knowledge of the Lord

Isaiah prophesied of the great millennial day when peace and love would cover the earth (see 2 Nephi 21:6–9). When that day comes, “the enmity of man, and the enmity of beasts, yea, the enmity of all flesh, shall cease” (D&C 101:26).

2 Nephi 21:10. “A Root of Jesse”

Doctrine and Covenants 113:5–6 identifies the “root of Jesse” (v. 5; see also 2 Nephi 21:10). This “root . . . shall stand for an ensign of the people” (v. 10).

2 Nephi 21:14 “The Shoulders of the Philistines”

“Seven hundred years before the birth of the Savior, the Prophet Isaiah, looking down the vista of time, saw the Latter-day gathering of the scattered House of Israel, and said concerning them: ‘They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the West.’ We recognize the fulfillment of that prophecy in the founding of this Church by Joseph Smith, a lineal descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who thus lifted the Ensign for the gathering of their descendants from their long dispersion among the nations. But a part of the fulfillment rests with the Gentiles. Their steamships, their railroads, their means of rapid transit and communication—these are ‘the shoulders of the Philistines,’ upon which the children of Ephraim have been and are being brought to the West, to the land of Zion, where the New Jerusalem is to rise, where the pure in heart will assemble, and the necessary preparation be made for the coming of the Lord in his glory. God works outside as well as inside his Church, and uses big things and little things for the accomplishment of his purposes” (Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1919, p. 69).

2 Nephi 23:1–5. Gathering of the Lord’s Forces

At the Second Coming the Lord’s anger will not be “upon them that rejoice in [his] highness” (2 Nephi 23:3). Instead, he will call those sanctified and mighty ones “from the end of heaven” (v. 5), and their gathering will be “like as of a great people, a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together” (v. 4).

2 Nephi 23:6–13. “The Day of the Lord”

The verses in 2 Nephi 23:6–13 give an idea of what it will be like at the Savior’s second coming. It is to “come as a destruction from the Almighty” (v. 6). It is a day when “he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of [the land]” (v. 9). Compare verse 10 with Doctrine and Covenants 88:87, and 2 Nephi 23:13 with Doctrine and Covenants 88:89–91. These verses describe changes that will occur just before the Savior’s second coming.

2 Nephi 23:13–22. Judgments Predicted for the Wicked

The Lord said, “I will be merciful unto my people [the righteous], but the wicked shall perish” (2 Nephi 23:22). Those who oppose the Lord will witness great devastation prior to and at the Second Coming. Those “joined to the wicked shall fall by the sword” (v. 15), and “their houses shall be spoiled” (v. 16). Their

children and wives will also suffer greatly (see vv. 15–16). This is Isaiah’s depiction of the great judgments that John the Revelator later saw (see Revelation 9, 11, 16–18).

Remember that the name Babylon has both literal and spiritual meaning (see 2 Nephi 23:19–22). As is the case with many of Isaiah’s prophecies, there is a dual fulfillment for this prophecy. Babylon became one of the most glorious cities of the world during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, around 600 B.C. It fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. and began a long decline. By the time of Christ, Babylon was inhabited only by a few Jews exiled by Roman decree. A hundred years later it was totally desolate and has remained uninhabited to this day.

Babylon is also the name for Satan’s kingdom, or the world (see D&C 1:16). In the great judgments that will immediately precede the Second Coming, spiritual Babylon, also known as the church of the devil or the great whore of the earth (see 1 Nephi 14:10, Revelation 17:1–5), will be destroyed and remain in utter desolation during the Millennium.

2 Nephi 24:1–12. Israel’s Millennial Rest

The day will come when “the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel” (2 Nephi 24:1). The Lord will gather his people “from far unto the ends of the earth; and they shall return to their lands of promise” (v. 2). Then “they shall rule over their [former] oppressors” (v. 2) and shall be given “rest, from [their] sorrow, and from [their] fear, and from the hard bondage” of their scattered years (v. 3). Verses 4 through 12 can be interpreted as taunting words against both Lucifer and Israel’s former oppressors, whose pomp “is brought down to the grave” (v. 11).

2 Nephi 24:12–17. Lucifer

The only places in the Bible and the Book of Mormon where the title *Lucifer* is used are Isaiah 14:12 and 2 Nephi 24:12. In Doctrine and Covenants 76:25–28 we learn that Lucifer (which means “lightbearer”) was the premortal name of Satan. Because of his rebellion against God he fell from his position of “authority in the presence of God” (v. 25) and “was called Perdition” (v. 26), which means “destruction.”

2 Nephi 24:18–32. Triumph over Babylon

Though Babylon was once a mighty nation, God rose against it and “cut off from Babylon the name” (2 Nephi 24:22). The same was true of the Assyrians

who despoiled the kingdom of Israel anciently (see v. 25). In the latter days, just as Lucifer fell from heaven to the earth, the wicked nations who have afflicted the Lord’s people will be brought down and “never be renowned” (v. 20). The Lord will establish Zion, “and the poor of his people shall trust in it” (v. 32). We will see a dual fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy; Babylon fell in the days of its kings, and spiritual Babylon, with Satan as its king, will yet fall.

Points to Ponder

- What is taught about the Millennium in 2 Nephi 21:5–9 and 30:11–18?
- What did Isaiah say would bring about the gathering of Israel and the fulfillment of the Lord’s promises to Israel? What part do Latter-day Saints play in these prophecies? (see 1 Nephi 22:3–12, 2 Nephi 21:11–12, 25:17).
- Study and cross-reference Isaiah 14:12–14, Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:7–9, 2 Nephi 24:12–14, Doctrine and Covenants 29:36–39, 76:25–29, and Moses 4:1–4. List what these scriptures teach about Lucifer, his actions in the War in Heaven, and the results of those actions.

Chapter 12

2 Nephi 25–27

Introduction

Nephi was a mighty seer and prophesied about future events involving the Nephites and Lamanites, the Jews, and the Gentiles. Nephi saw our day and the great work that would be accomplished in the dispensation of the fulness of times. He quoted the words of the prophet Isaiah to testify of many of these things.

Notes and Commentary

2 Nephi 25:1–7. Understanding Isaiah’s Prophecies

Why were the words of Isaiah hard for many of Nephi’s people to understand? (see 2 Nephi 25:1). What people are able to plainly understand Isaiah’s prophecies? (see v. 4). When will men in general understand Isaiah’s words? (see v. 7).

2 Nephi 25:7–16. Nephi’s Prophecies

What did Nephi prophesy about the following events?

The destruction and captivity of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (see 2 Nephi 25:10).

The restoration of the Jews under Cyrus of Persia (see v. 11).

The rejection of the Son of God by the Jews (see v. 12).

The death and resurrection of Jesus (see v. 13).

The second destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 (see v. 14).

The scattering of the Jews (see v. 15).

The eventual acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah by the Jews (see v. 16).

2 Nephi 25:23. “Grace”

“One of the most fallacious doctrines originated by Satan and propounded by man is that man is saved alone by the grace of God; that belief in Jesus Christ alone is all that is needed for salvation. . . . One passage in the Book of Mormon, written perhaps . . . to stress and induce appreciation for the gracious gift of salvation offered on condition of obedience . . . is particularly enlightening: ‘For we labor diligently to

write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do.*’ (2 Nephi 25:23; italics added.) . . .

“. . . However good a person’s works, he could not be saved had Jesus not died for his and everyone else’s sins. And however powerful the saving grace of Christ, it brings exaltation to no man who does not comply with the works of the gospel.

“Of course we need to understand terms. If by the word *salvation* is meant the mere salvation or redemption from the grave, the ‘grace of God’ is sufficient. But if the term *salvation* means returning to the presence of God with eternal progression, eternal increase, and eventual godhood, for this one certainly must have the ‘grace of God,’ as it is generally defined, plus personal purity, overcoming of evil, and the good ‘works’ made so important in the exhortations of the Savior and his prophets and apostles” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pp. 70–71).

2 Nephi 26:1–6. Nephite Nation to Suffer for Wickedness

Nephi foresaw the day when the Nephite nation, having cast out the prophets and the Saints, would suffer for its wickedness. What form would this suffering take? (see 2 Nephi 26:5–6). Notice how Nephi spoke to future generations of Nephites as though they were present (see v. 1).

2 Nephi 26:7–14. Destruction of the Nephites

Nephi lamented the future destruction he foresaw of his people, but he was compelled to acknowledge to the Lord, “Thy ways are just” (2 Nephi 26:7). Nephi also foresaw that “the righteous that hearken unto the words of the prophets . . . are they which shall not perish” (v. 8; see also 1 Nephi 22:17–19). These people would be visited by Christ and begin several generations of peace (see 2 Nephi 26:9). Eventually, however, the Nephite nation would fall into a “speedy destruction” because the Spirit of the Lord would cease to strive with the people (see vv. 10–11).

In verse 12 Nephi seems to have used the term *Jew* in the broader sense of the word, that is, as a term for Israel. He divided those who were to be convinced as

Jews (Israel) from those convinced as Gentiles (non-Israel). Nephi prophesied that this great conversion would take place in the last days (see v. 14).

2 Nephi 26:15–16. Voices from Out of the Dust

“Nephi is evidently quoting from a statement found in Isaiah 29:4 when he refers to a destroyed people whose record shall come ‘out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit.’ (2 Nephi 26:16.) . . .

“ . . . A careful reading of this scripture, particularly when read together with Nephi’s explanation, would indicate that the term it ‘hath a familiar spirit’ means that this record (the Book of Mormon) would speak with a ‘familiar voice’ to those who already have the Bible. In other words, Nephi is evidently saying here that the doctrinal teachings of the Book of Mormon would seem familiar to people who had already read and accepted the Bible” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 146).

2 Nephi 26:17–22. Apostasy

Nephi said that an account of the events that would take place among his people would “be written and sealed up in a book” (2 Nephi 26:17). He then prophesied of how the Gentiles in the latter days would stumble “because of the greatness of their stumbling block” (v. 20). He said they would build up false churches and “put down the power and miracles of God” (v. 20). Strife, malice, and secret combinations would increase as a result.

Has Nephi adequately described the Christian world of today? According to Nephi, what is the real source of apostasy, stumbling, and darkness? (see v. 22). How did the Lord propose to remove that stumbling in the latter days?

In verse 12 Nephi promised that both the Jews and the Gentiles would be convinced that Jesus is the Christ (see also the title page of the Book of Mormon). An important factor in bringing about that great conversion is the Book of Mormon.

2 Nephi 26:23–28. Salvation Offered to All

Nephi said that God “doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world” (2 Nephi 26:24) and for the sake of man’s salvation. To whom is Christ’s salvation offered? Is anyone excluded? (see v. 27).

The assurance that salvation is given freely to all men is not a suggestion that no effort is required on

our part. The Lord said, “If thou wilt do good, yea, and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the kingdom of God, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation” (D&C 6:13).

2 Nephi 27:3–6. “Covered Because of Your Iniquity”

Compare 2 Nephi 27:3–6 with Isaiah 29:7–10. These references describe a people in apostasy. These people are asleep spiritually and so they stumble, not because they are intoxicated, but because they have no prophet to guide their steps.

“Isaiah speaks of a time when deep sleep should be poured out upon the nations of the earth, and they should be drunken, but not with wine; they should stagger, but not with strong drink; and the Prophets and the Seers, &c., should be covered; in other words, they would not have any Prophets or Seers. [Isaiah 29:7–10.] Every one will bear me witness that that was the case at the time these plates were brought forth. Where was there a people who received revelation? Where were their Prophets and Seers? Gone, covered” (Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:185–86).

2 Nephi 27:7–11. The Sealed Portion

A portion of the plates from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon was sealed, and he was commanded not to translate that part. Nephi wrote of what was contained in the sealed portion (see 2 Nephi 27:7, 10), when it would become available to us (see v. 10; see also Ether 4:4–7), and how it would be made available (see 2 Nephi 27:11). The verses in 1 Nephi 14:26 and 3 Nephi 26:9–11 also refer to the sealing up of sacred writings.

2 Nephi 27:15–18. Genuine Translation

Early in the process of translating the Book of Mormon, Martin Harris desired proof that the translation Joseph Smith was making was genuine. Martin Harris obtained permission to carry a copy of a few of the characters from the plates, not the book itself, together with their translation to some learned men in New York. For an account of what happened read Joseph Smith—History 1:63–65.

2 Nephi 27:24–28. “A Marvelous Work and a Wonder”

The “marvelous work and a wonder” spoken of by the Lord in 2 Nephi 27:26 includes the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the priesthood and the Church, and the presence of latter-day prophets on the

earth. But it is even more than these things. It is the restoration of *all* things, including the establishment of Zion on the earth again.

2 Nephi 27:28. “A Fruitful Field”

Elder Mark E. Petersen commented on Isaiah 29:17:

“As he opens the subject in his twenty-ninth chapter, Isaiah describes a [Nephite] nation which would be destroyed suddenly, but which would speak in modern times, literally from the grave, by means of a book [the Book of Mormon]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, p. 16; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 12).

Elder Petersen pointed out how Isaiah said the event would take place “before Palestine regains its fertility. Palestine is now the fruitful field [Isaiah] envisioned, and the book has been published” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, p. 16; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 12).

2 Nephi 27:29. Spiritual Deafness and Blindness

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that: “*Spiritual deafness* describes the state of those who are lacking in spirituality, whose spirit ears are not attuned to the whisperings of the still small voice of the Spirit. Similarly, *spiritual blindness* is the identifying mark which singles out those who are unable to see the hand of God manifest in the affairs of men. Such have ‘unbelief and blindness of heart’ (D. & C. 58:15); they are ‘hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds.’ (3 Ne. 2:1.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 184).

2 Nephi 27:30–34. Consuming the Scorners

Compare 2 Nephi 27:30–34 with Isaiah 29:19–23.

“Another event is spoken of in connection with the bringing forth of this book [the Book of Mormon]— ‘For the terrible one is brought to naught, the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off.’ Has that ever been fulfilled? No, but it will be in its time and in its season; but not until they have heard the words of the book, and have been thoroughly warned by the coming forth of truth out of the earth. When that has been sounded in their ears, if they hardened their hearts against it the decree of the Almighty is that all that watch for iniquity shall be cut off. All who persecute the Saints of the living God, all who would make a man an offender for a word, that will lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, that will turn aside the just for a thing of naught,

are to be consumed” (Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:188).

2 Nephi 27:35. The Fulness of the Gospel

“‘They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.’ (Isa. 29:1–24.) Such is the purpose of the Book of Mormon. Members of false churches who err in spirit, who think they have the truth, are brought by the Book of Mormon to the fulness of the gospel. Those who have based their beliefs on isolated verses and obscure passages, and who have wondered and murmured at seeming biblical conflicts, come to learn sound doctrine. No longer do they worry about the atonement, salvation by grace alone, infant baptism, the priesthood, the gifts of the Spirit, the passages about an apostasy, a gospel restoration, and the gathering of Israel. All things fall into place because of this new witness for Christ and his gospel, this witness which bears the name of the prophet Mormon” (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah*, pp. 174–75).

Points to Ponder

- Make a list of Nephi’s prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, the Nephites and Lamanites, the Jews, and the Gentiles (see 2 Nephi 25–27).
- What impressed you about Nephi’s prophecies concerning the last days?

Chapter 13

2 Nephi 28–30

Introduction

Nephi saw the deceptions Satan would perpetrate in the last days. By giving us knowledge of Satan’s intentions and tactics, Nephi’s warnings help us avoid being entrapped by Satan.

Notes and Commentary

2 Nephi 28:1. Constrained by the Spirit

It is interesting that Nephi felt constrained by the Spirit to speak to his brethren as he did. *Constrained* means to be compelled or to do something out of necessity. For other examples of being constrained by the Spirit see 1 Nephi 4:10, Alma 14:11, 4 Nephi 1:48, and Doctrine and Covenants 63:64.

2 Nephi 28:2–14. The Value of the Book of Mormon

The book mentioned in 2 Nephi 28:2 is the Book of Mormon, described by Nephi in 2 Nephi 27. Nephi said the book would be of great worth because of conditions in the last days. The “for” in 2 Nephi 28:3 means “because.” In other words, the Book of Mormon will be of great worth in our day *because* of the following conditions:

1. Churches will be built up that—
 - a. Claim to be the Lord’s but really are full of contention (see vv. 3–4; compare with Joseph Smith—History 1:5).
 - b. Teach with their own learning and deny the Holy Spirit (see 2 Nephi 28:4).
 - c. Deny the power of God by denying priesthood authority, and by denying God still operates in the lives of men in the same way (see vv. 5–6).
 - d. Teach that sin and wickedness are excusable (see vv. 7–8).
2. There will be many who teach false doctrines, are puffed up in their pride, work in darkness, and become corrupted (see vv. 9–12).
3. Pride, false teachers, and false doctrines will lead to many evils (see v. 12):
 - a. Exploitation of the poor (see v. 13).

- b. Persecution of the humble (see v. 13).
- c. Widespread apostasy (see v. 14).
- d. Deception of the humble followers of Christ (see v. 14).

How does the Book of Mormon help counteract these conditions in our time? Sincerely pondering the answer to this question will broaden our perspective about the impact of this book and why it plays such a central role in the restoration of the Church and gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 Nephi 28:8. “Eat, Drink, and Be Merry”

Elder George Albert Smith spoke about how even little indiscretions lead us away from the Spirit and put us in Satan’s power. After quoting 2 Nephi 28:8 Elder Smith said: “Isn’t that just exactly what the devil says to the children of men today as plainly as it is written here? Oh, commit a little sin, that won’t do any harm, lie a little, that won’t do any particular damage, the Lord will forgive that and you will only be beaten with a few stripes and at last you shall be saved in the kingdom of God. That is what he says to the man or the woman who has been taught the Word of Wisdom when he says, oh, drink a little tea, that won’t hurt you; use a little tobacco, that won’t make any difference; a little liquor won’t do any harm. These are little things; he always does it a little at a time, not all at once. That is what I would like us to remember, my brethren, this morning. It is these insignificant insidious whisperings that betray mankind and that place us in the power of the devil. I want to say to you, in my judgment, that the use of tobacco, a little thing as it seems to some men, has been the means of destroying their spiritual life, has been the means of driving from them the companionship of the Spirit of our Father, has alienated them from the society of good men and women, and has brought upon them the disregard and reproach of the children that have been born to them, and yet the devil will say to a man, Oh, it’s only a little thing!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1918, pp. 39–40).

In a later conference address, speaking on the same scripture, Elder Smith said:

“‘Yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words.’”

“Think of what that means, the whisperings of the adversary to lie a little. Whether it be a lie intended to [affect] a religious organization, a business organization, a political organization, or an individual, the lie will brand the one who tells it, and sooner or later he will have to account for the wrong he has committed.

“Yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.’

“That is what the adversary of righteousness is saying to the children of men. That is what Lucifer who goes about defiling the people is breathing into their souls. That is the kind of doctrine that is being disseminated in the world by some of those who ought to be the leaders of morality and also of righteousness. But to you, my brethren and sisters, the obligation has been given that you must refute such things as these when you know of them” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1932, p. 29).

2 Nephi 28:14. “Taught by the Precepts of Men”

“Yes, within the Church today there are tares among the wheat and wolves within the flock. As President Clark stated, ‘The ravening wolves are amongst us, from our own membership, and they, more than any others, are clothed in sheep’s clothing because they wear the habiliments of the priesthood. . . . We should be careful of them. . . .’ (. . . *Conference Report*, April 1949, p. 163.)

“The wolves amongst our flock are more numerous and devious today than when President Clark made this statement. . . .

“Not only are there apostates within our midst, but there are also apostate doctrines that are sometimes taught in our classes and from our pulpits and that appear in our publications. And these apostate precepts of men cause our people to stumble. . . .

“Christ taught that we should be in the world but not of it. Yet there are some in our midst who are not so much concerned about taking the gospel into the world as they are about bringing worldliness into the gospel. They want us to be in the world and of it. They want us to be popular with the worldly even though a prophet has said that this is impossible, for all hell would then want to join us.

“Through their own reasoning and a few misapplied scriptures, they try to sell us the precepts and philosophies of men. They do not feel the Church is progressive enough” (Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, p. 11).

2 Nephi 28:15–22. Three Dangers That Threaten the Saints

“There are at least three dangers that threaten the Church within, and the authorities need to awaken to the fact that the people should be warned unceasingly against them. As I see these, they are flattery of prominent men in the world, false educational ideas, and sexual impurity” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 312–13; see also 2 Nephi 9:28–29).

2 Nephi 28:21. “Leadeth Them Away Carefully”

In a general conference address, Elder George Albert Smith quoted 2 Nephi 28:21 and said: “Now, I want you to note that: ‘And thus the devil cheateth their souls and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.’ And that is the way he does it, that’s exactly the way he does it. He does not come and grab you bodily and take you into his territory, but he whispers, ‘Do this little evil,’ and when he succeeds in that, another little evil and another, and, to use the expression quoted, ‘He cheateth their souls.’ That’s what he does. He makes you believe that you are gaining something when you are losing. So it is every time we fail to observe a law of God or keep a commandment, we are being cheated, because there is no gain in this world or in the world to come but by obedience to the law of our heavenly Father. Then again, that peculiar suggestion, ‘And he leadeth them *carefully* away down to hell’ is significant, that is his method. Men and women in the world today are subject to that influence, and they are being drawn here and there, and that whispering is going on and they do not understand what the Lord desires them to do, but they continue in the territory of the evil one, subject to his power where the Spirit of the Lord will not go” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1918, p. 40).

2 Nephi 28:22–23. The Existence of Satan

Why would Satan be happy to have people believe he does not exist? Elder Marion G. Romney bore this witness:

“A corollary to the pernicious falsehood that God is dead is the equally pernicious doctrine that there is no devil. Satan himself is the father of both of these lies. To believe them is to surrender to him. Such

surrender has always led, is leading now, and will continue to lead men to destruction.

“Latter-day Saints know that there is a God. With like certainty, they know that Satan lives, that he is a powerful personage of spirit, the archenemy of God, of man, and of righteousness.

“The reality of the existence of both God and the devil is conclusively established by the scriptures and by human experience” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 22; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 35).

2 Nephi 29:1–6. “A Bible! A Bible!”

Satan fought a desperate battle to prevent the Book of Mormon from coming forth (see D&C 10). When he failed in this, his next tactic was to discredit its value in the eyes of the people.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented on those who reject the Book of Mormon: “Strange as it may seem to present day enemies of the truth, their very opposition to the receipt of more of the word of the Lord by way of the Book of Mormon is one of the signs of the times. Their opposition, summarized in the canting chant, ‘A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible,’ brings forth this severe rebuke from the Lord: ‘Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. . . . Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word?’ (2 Ne. 29.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 719).

2 Nephi 29:3. Using the Book of Mormon

“Now, we have not been using the Book of Mormon as we should. Our homes are not as strong unless we are using it to bring our children to Christ. Our families may be corrupted by worldly trends and teachings unless we know how to use the book to expose and combat the falsehoods in socialism, organic evolution, rationalism, humanism, etc. Our missionaries are not as effective unless they are ‘hissing forth’ with it. Social, ethical, cultural, or educational converts will not survive under the heat of the day unless their taproots go down to the fulness of the gospel which the Book of Mormon contains. Our church classes are not as spirit-filled unless we hold it up as a standard. And our nation will continue to degenerate unless we read and heed the words of the God of this land, Jesus Christ, and quit building up and upholding the secret combinations which the Book of Mormon tells us proved the downfall of both previous American civilizations” (Ezra Taft Benson, in

Conference Report, Apr. 1975, p. 96; or *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 65).

2 Nephi 29:7–14. The Testimony of Two Nations

With reference to 2 Nephi 29:7–8, President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“This was spoken by prophecy to the gentiles of the present day. It should be remembered also, that the law given to Israel was that ‘the testimony of two men is true [John 8:17],’ providing they are honorable witnesses. Here the Lord applies the law to nations. Why should it not be so?

“If the word of the Lord is to be established by two chosen witnesses, then we may well look for two chosen nations to stand as witnesses for Jesus Christ. One such nation was Israel in Palestine, the other was Israel in America, Judah speaking from the Old World and Joseph from the New. Today these two testimonies for God and his truth have run together” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:278).

2 Nephi 30:1–3. “The Holy One of Israel”

In the scriptures the word *Israel* is used in several ways. There is a blood Israel and a spiritual Israel. According to Nephi, what makes a person a true member of the house of Israel? How is this related to Paul’s comment in Romans 9:6 that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel”? (see also Romans 2:28–29).

2 Nephi 30:4. Descendants of the Jews

Jew and *Judah* are national names as well as tribal names. From about 1800 B.C. to about 750 B.C. the terms *Jew* and *Judah* applied specifically to only one of the thirteen tribes (counting Joseph as two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, as in Numbers 2). After that time, the terms increasingly began to be used to name any citizen of the kingdom of Judah, which consisted primarily of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but included many people from other tribes, especially Levi.

The term *Jew* first appears in the Old Testament in 2 Kings 16:6, at the time just before the northern kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria. Thereafter, the Jews, or the southern kingdom of Judah, became the only known surviving remnant of Israel. Nephi referred to the Jews as “them from whence I came” (2 Nephi 33:8).

Mulek, and possibly all of the Mulekites, were Jews of the tribe of Judah. They were “exceedingly numerous” (Omni 1:17) when discovered by the

people of King Mosiah. In addition to being descendants of the Jews in the national sense, there is also a blood relationship to the tribe of Judah among the modern Lamanites.

2 Nephi 30:4–6. “The Remnant of Our Seed”

“We now have some half million Indian or Lamanite members in the Church. . . .

“ . . . We already have 89 stakes that are entirely Lamanite, and 100 stakes with sizeable numbers of Lamanites in them. Then we have approximately 380 stakes with some mixture of Lamanites in them.

“This is a new day. There is a new ground swell. We now have Lamanite stake presidents, mission presidents, bishops, high councilors, branch presidents, presidents of auxiliary organizations, and even a General Authority of the Lamanites” (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Lamanite* [address delivered at Regional Representatives’ seminar, 1 Apr. 1977], pp. 4, 8, 12).

Points to Ponder

- Summarize Nephi’s teachings on the strategies Satan uses to pull members of the Church away from the truth (see 2 Nephi 28:20–32).
- Read and mark the following scripture chain and then make a list of things you can do to avoid deception: 2 Nephi 28:30, Alma 17:2–3, Moroni 7:15–19, Doctrine and Covenants 46:7, 21:4–6, 42:11.
- What special blessings did Nephi prophesy would come to the Jews, the Lamanites, and the Gentiles? (see 2 Nephi 30).

Chapter 14

2 Nephi 31–33

Introduction

Nephi lived an adventurous life, facing numerous challenges. Some of the challenges he faced included fleeing Jerusalem, building a ship, crossing the waters to the promised land, colonizing, withstanding persecution, fulfilling family and leadership responsibilities, and keeping records. Toward the end of his inspiring life, Nephi wrote his concluding testimony and bore witness of the “doctrine of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:2), the power of the Holy Ghost, and the truthfulness of the words he had written.

Notes and Commentary

2 Nephi 31:1–3. “The Doctrine of Christ”

Simply stated, “the doctrine of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:2) is that all who have faith in Jesus Christ, truly repent of their sins, and enter into a baptismal covenant with the Lord will receive the Holy Ghost. This third member of the Godhead will then direct their path and show them all of the things they must do to achieve salvation. We embrace the doctrine of Christ by following Christ’s example.

Notice how often Nephi wrote about following the Son of God and doing the things the Son did (see vv. 5, 9–10, 12–13, 16–17). In Jesus Christ we have the perfect example of one who entered the path leading to eternal life and never departed from it.

The Savior himself indicated how important the doctrine of Christ is when he said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them” (3 Nephi 11:39). For parallel discussions on the doctrine of Christ see 3 Nephi 11:31–41, 27:8–22, and Moses 6:48–68.

Notice in 2 Nephi 31:3 Nephi’s desire to make his words plain and easy for us to understand (see also 2 Nephi 25:4, 33:6).

2 Nephi 31:4–10. “To Fulfil All Righteousness”

“Some different reasons exist as to the need for baptism in the case of our Lord, he being without sin and in need of no repentance. His expression to John was, ‘Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to

fulfil all righteousness.’ (Matt. 3:15.) Nephi explains that Christ did fulfill all righteousness in being baptized in that: 1. He humbled himself before the Father; 2. He covenanted to be obedient and keep the Father’s commandments; 3. He had to be baptized to gain admission to the celestial kingdom; and 4. He set an example for all men to follow. (2 Ne. 31:4–11.)

“Our Lord’s baptism ‘showeth unto the children of men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them.’ (2 Ne. 31:9.) If even the King of the kingdom could not return to his high state of preexistent exaltation without complying with his own eternal law for admission to that kingdom, how can any man expect a celestial inheritance without an authorized and approved baptism?” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 71).

2 Nephi 31:12. The Gift of the Holy Ghost

“An intelligent being, in the image of God, possesses every organ, attribute, sense, sympathy, affection that is possessed by God himself.

“But these are possessed by man, in his rudimental state, in a subordinate sense of the word. Or, in other words, these attributes are in embryo and are to be gradually developed. They resemble a bud, a germ, which gradually develops into bloom, and then, by progress, produces the mature fruit after its own kind.

“The gift of the Holy Ghost adapts itself to all these organs or attributes. It quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates, and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings, and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness, and charity. It develops beauty of person, form, and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation, and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being” (Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, p. 61).

2 Nephi 31:13. “Acting No Hypocrisy”

Speaking about the many times Jesus condemned hypocrisy, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., said: “Taking the New Testament alone, you will gain little idea of the kind of life the Romans led in Palestine, the kind of life that the Christ condemned, and yet . . . it has seemed to me that the one sin that the Savior condemned as much as any other was the sin of hypocrisy—the living of the double life, the life we let our friends and sometimes our wives believe, and the life we actually live” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1960, p. 90).

The word *hypocrite* is translated from a Greek word meaning an actor on the stage. A hypocrite is, therefore, a person who pretends to be something he is not, or one who assumes different roles that do not reflect his real thinking and feeling.

Nephi wrote that we must follow Christ “with full purpose of heart” and “with real intent” (2 Nephi 31:13) to receive the blessings of the Holy Ghost. “Full purpose of heart” suggests a total commitment of the inner man to Christ; “real intent” conveys the idea of sincere or pure motives. Moroni later wrote of this principle when he indicated that a testimony of the Book of Mormon is received through seeking “with a sincere heart, with real intent” (Moroni 10:4). He also wrote that true righteousness is based on the intent of the heart (see Moroni 7:6–9).

2 Nephi 31:13. “Receive the Holy Ghost”

“Now I am going to say something that maybe I could not prove, but I believe is true, that we have a great many members of this Church who have never received a manifestation through the Holy Ghost. Why? Because they have not made their lives conform to the truth. And the Holy Ghost will not dwell in unclean tabernacles or disobedient tabernacles. The Holy Ghost will not dwell with that person who is unwilling to obey and keep the commandments of God or who violates those commandments willfully. In such a soul the spirit of the Holy Ghost cannot enter. That great gift comes to us only through humility and faith and obedience. Therefore, a great many members of the Church do not have that guidance. Then some cunning, crafty individual will come along teaching that which is not true, and without guidance which is promised to us through our faithfulness, people are unable to discern and are led astray. It depends on our faithfulness and our obedience to the commandments of the Lord if we have the teachings, the enlightening instruction, that comes from the Holy Ghost.

“When we are disobedient, when our minds are set upon the things of this world rather than on the things of the kingdom of God, we cannot have the manifestations of the Holy Ghost. Did you ever stop to think what a great privilege it is for us to have the companionship of one of the members of the Godhead? Have you thought of it that way? That is our privilege, if we keep the commandments the Lord has given us” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *We Are Here to Be Tried, Tested, Proved*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [25 Oct. 1961], pp. 4–5).

2 Nephi 31:13–17. The “Baptism of Fire”

Nephi wrote about two baptisms (see 2 Nephi 31:13). One was the baptism of water, which may be administered under the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, and the other was the baptism of fire, or the Holy Ghost, administered under the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Speaking of this baptism of fire, Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained:

“By the power of the Holy Ghost—who is the Sanctifier (3 Ne. 27:19–21)—dross, iniquity, carnality, sensuality, and every evil thing is burned out of the repentant soul as if by fire; the cleansed person becomes literally a new creature of the Holy Ghost. (Mosiah 27:24–26.) He is born again.

“The baptism of fire is not something in addition to the receipt of the Holy Ghost; rather, it is the actual enjoyment of the gift which is offered by the laying on of hands at the time of baptism. ‘Remission of sins,’ the Lord says, comes ‘*by baptism and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost.*’ (D. & C. 19:31; 2 Ne. 31:17.) Those who receive the baptism of fire are ‘*filled as if with fire.*’ (Hela. 5:45.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 73).

2 Nephi 31:17–20. A Gate

“Sometimes someone will say: ‘Well, I have been baptized into the Church; I am a member of the Church; I’ll just go along and live an ordinary sort of life; I won’t commit any great crimes; I’ll live a reasonably good Christian life; and eventually I will gain the kingdom of God.’

“I don’t understand it that way. I think that baptism is a gate. It is a gate which puts us on a path; and the name of the path is the straight and narrow path. The straight and narrow path leads upward from the gate of baptism to the celestial kingdom of heaven. After a person has entered the gate of baptism, he has to press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, as Nephi expresses it, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men; and if he

endures to the end, then he gains the promised reward” (Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, p. 16).

2 Nephi 31:19–20. Feast Upon the Word of Christ

“We are saddened to learn, as we travel about the stakes and missions of the Church, that there are still many of the Saints who are not reading and pondering the scriptures regularly, and who have little knowledge of the Lord’s instructions to the children of men. Many have been baptized and received a testimony, and have ‘gotten into this straight and narrow path,’ yet have failed to take the further required step—to ‘press forward, *feasting upon the word of Christ*, and endure to the end.’ (2 Ne. 31:19–20; italics added.)” (Spencer W. Kimball, “How Rare a Possession—the Scriptures!” *Ensign*, Sept. 1976, p. 2).

2 Nephi 32:1–6. “What Ye Should Do”

The Holy Ghost does not necessarily take a person by the hand and guide him step by step through life. As President Joseph F. Smith said:

“If a man is baptized and ordained to the Holy Priesthood, and is called upon to perform duties which pertain to that Priesthood, it does not follow that he must always have the Holy Ghost in person present with him when he performs his duty, but every righteous act which he may perform legally will be in force and effect, and will be acknowledged of God, and the more of the Spirit of God he possesses in his ministrations, the better for himself, and those will not suffer any loss unto whom he administers.

“Therefore, the presentation or ‘gift’ of the Holy Ghost simply confers upon a man the right to receive at any time, when he is worthy of it and desires it, the power and light of truth of the Holy Ghost, *although he may often be left to his own spirit and judgment*” (*Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 60–61; emphasis added).

2 Nephi 32:7–9. Personal Revelation

“Revelation is promised us through our faithfulness; so, also, is knowledge pertaining to the mysteries and government of the Church. The Lord withholds much that he would otherwise reveal if the members of the Church were prepared to receive it. When they will not live in accordance with the revelations he has given, how are they entitled to receive more? The people in the Church are not living in full accord with the commandments the Lord has already required of them.

“We find ourselves, therefore, much like the Nephites when Nephi spoke of revelation: ‘And now I, Nephi, cannot say more; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be.’

“We have little occasion to clamor for more revelation when we refuse to heed what the Lord has revealed for our salvation. However, the authorities are directed by revelation, and this is apparent to all who have the spirit of discernment. The Lord has not forsaken his people, although they have not always put their trust in him” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:283).

2 Nephi 33:1–4. Carried to the Heart

“In modern revelation the Lord has established a spiritual test to find truth.

“He says in the ninth section of the Doctrine and Covenants simply: ‘But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.’ (V. 8.)

“The words ‘you shall feel that it is right’ refer to a feeling of peace and warmth, a feeling that touches the soul. . . . It is a feeling that is unique in its peace and joy because it emanates from Jesus Christ. It is that feeling which brings a greater knowledge and a more sure witness than even flesh and bones” (Loren C. Dunn, in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, p. 43; or *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 31).

2 Nephi 33:5–15. The End of Nephi’s Record

As Nephi closed his record he wrote that he had charity for all people (see 2 Nephi 33:7–9). Compare Nephi’s remarks with Moroni’s discussions of charity in Ether 12:33–39 and Moroni 7:43–48.

The idea that readers of the Book of Mormon will meet its original authors face-to-face at the great day of judgment was expressed by both Nephi and Moroni (see 2 Nephi 33:11–15, Ether 12:38–39, Moroni 10:27–29). Who was Nephi writing to when he wrote, “I bid you an everlasting farewell”? (2 Nephi 33:13–14).

Points to Ponder

- To better understand “the doctrine of Christ,” read and cross-reference 2 Nephi 31:2–21, 32:1–6, 3 Nephi 11:30–41, 27:8–22. Using your own words, write a brief paragraph describing the doctrine of Christ.
- Sometimes we take our baptism for granted. The following exercise may help you increase your appreciation for your baptism:
 1. Write down any information you remember about your baptism, such as the date, the place, who baptized you, and any special feelings you had. You may also want to attend the next baptism in your stake or take part in doing baptisms for the dead at the next opportunity.
 2. Look up *baptism* in the Bible Dictionary. Read the information and answer the following questions: What does the word baptism mean? How long has baptism been upon the earth? What does baptism symbolize? Why was Jesus baptized? (see 2 Nephi 31:4–9). What are the purposes of baptism? Who can baptize? What can you do to remember the covenants you made at baptism, and what are these covenants? (see Mosiah 18:8–10).
- Nephi knew that having the Holy Ghost was an important key in striving for eternal life. Read 2 Nephi 31–33, and list at least six things the Holy Ghost can do for us.

Chapter 15

Jacob 1–4

Introduction

Because of pride and exceeding wealth, the Nephites during the time of Jacob were “weighed down” with many sins, particularly the sin of immorality. Jacob denounced these evil practices and boldly called the people to repentance.

Notes and Commentary

Jacob 1:1–7. “Things . . . Most Precious”

Before his death, Nephi gave Jacob the responsibility of taking care of the small plates. Nephi also instructed Jacob to write “a few of the things which [Jacob] considered to be most precious” (Jacob 1:2). What things did Jacob consider to be “most precious”? (see v. 4).

Jacob 1:8. Suffering the Cross of Christ

“Growing out of the crucifixion of Christ is the concept that any great affliction or trial that comes upon the saints does in itself constitute a *cross* they must bear as part of their obligation to overcome the world. . . .

“. . . Similarly, the gospel cause commands every man to take up his *cross* and follow him who carried his own cross to Golgotha. That is, the saints are to carry the cross of service and consecration, the cross of devotion and obedience” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 173; see also Matthew 16:24d).

Jacob 1:9–19. “Magnify Your Callings”

“President John Taylor said on one occasion, speaking to the brethren of the priesthood: ‘If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those you might have saved, had you done your duty.’

“This is a challenging statement. If I by reason of sins of commission or omission lose what I might have had in the hereafter, I myself must suffer and, doubtless, my loved ones with me. But if I fail in my assignment as a bishop, a stake president, a mission president, or one of the General Authorities of the Church—if any of us fail to teach, lead, direct, and help to save those under our direction and within our jurisdiction, then the Lord will hold us responsible if

they are lost as the result of our failure” (Hugh B. Brown, in Conference Report, Oct. 1962, p. 84).

Jacob 2:12–19. “Before Ye Seek for Riches”

Jacob taught that God would not condemn the wealthy for their riches, but for their pride in being rich (see Jacob 2:13–14). The people of Nephi had made money, rather than God, the center of their life. Their search for wealth had become a means of persecuting their brethren rather than a means for doing good (see vv. 18–19). Jacob 2:12–19 and other related scriptures (see 1 Timothy 6:3–12, 17–19, James 5:1–6, Mosiah 4:16–26, Doctrine and Covenants 56:16–20, 104:13–18) teach the following about the accumulation of wealth:

1. Our first priority should be seeking for and building up the kingdom of God.
2. Money is a medium of exchange and is of itself neutral. Our attitude toward material and spiritual things shifts wealth out of its neutral position.
3. Two basic relationships help determine our attitude toward spiritual and material things—
 - a. Our relationship with God. If we turn our hearts away from God, the things of the world become our top priority. This is why Paul called covetousness “idolatry” (see Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:5).
 - b. Our relationship with our fellowmen. If we lose sight of the brotherhood of men, our desire for material wealth can lead us to such sins as dishonesty, covetousness, and neglect of the poor.

President David O. McKay counseled: “What seek ye first? What do you cherish as the dominant, the uppermost thought in your mind? What this is will largely determine your destiny. Notwithstanding the complexity of human society, we can encompass all purposes by two great important ones. *First*, the world of material gain; and, *second*, the world of happiness consisting of love and the power to do good. If it is your purpose to get worldly gain, you may obtain it. You may win in this world almost anything for which you strive. If you work for wealth, you can get it, but before you make it an end in itself, take a look at those men who have sacrificed all to the accomplishment of

this purpose, at those who have desired wealth for the sake of wealth itself. Gold does not corrupt man; it is in the motive of acquiring that gold that corruption occurs” (*Treasures of Life*, pp. 174–75).

Jacob 2:20–22. “Proud in Your Hearts”

Unrighteous pride is sometimes called the great sin of the spirit; it was the sin of Lucifer (see Isaiah 14:12–14). President N. Eldon Tanner spoke of how seeking the praise of the world can be a source of many other sins:

“We find examples . . . so often where a person, forgetting who he is, wants to be popular with his peers and wants their praise. So often athletes get so carried away with their success and desire for praise that they forget their duty to God and the importance of his approval and as a result lose their way. This applies equally to politicians, members of fraternal organizations, professions, and business. This craving for praise and popularity too often controls actions, and as they succumb they find themselves bending their character when they think they are only taking a bow.

“. . . If individuals are more concerned with pleasing men than pleasing God, then they suffer from the same virus Satan had, for there are many situations where seeking the praise of men will clearly result in their hurting, not helping, mankind for they will do expedient and temporary things instead of those which are lasting and beneficial.

“How much more satisfying it is when we receive the praise of God, knowing that it is fully justified and that his love and respect for us will persist, when usually the praise of men is fleeting and most disappointing” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, p. 115; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, p. 76).

Jacob 2:23–30. Plural Marriage

Jacob made it clear that the Lord did not want the Nephites to practice any form of plural marriage. He taught that monogamy was the law unless the Lord commanded otherwise (see Jacob 2:27–30).

In our time, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated: “*I have constantly said no man shall have but [other than] one wife at a time, unless the Lord directs otherwise*” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 324). It should be recognized that during the time members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints practiced plural marriage, the Lord commanded it.

Jacob 3:1–10. The “Pure in Heart”

“Zion can be built up only among those who are the pure in heart, not a people torn by covetousness or greed, but a pure and selfless people. Not a people who are pure in appearance, rather a people who are pure in heart. Zion is to be in the world and not of the world, not dulled by a sense of carnal security, nor paralyzed by materialism. No, Zion is not things of the lower, but of the higher order, things that exalt the mind and sanctify the heart” (Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, p. 122; or *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 81).

Jacob 3:11. “The Second Death”

“It is very clear in the Doctrine and Covenants 76:30–37, that the only persons who will be completely overcome by this dreadful fate are the sons of perdition, who go with the devil and his angels into ‘outer darkness.’ All the rest of mankind, even the wicked, will receive some measure of salvation after they suffer the wrath of God. However, they will of necessity be brought to repentance and acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ as far as it will apply to them. They will not be given the ordinances which do not pertain in their kingdoms. From the reading of other passages we discover that there will be great multitudes embracing the vast majority of mankind, who will never be privileged to come back to dwell in the presence of the Father and the Son. These receive banishment from their presence, but not entirely do they get beyond the divine benediction. . . .

“All those who are permanently subject to the second death are those who have had the testimony of the Holy Ghost and who have known the truth and then have rejected it and put Christ to open shame” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:76, 78).

Jacob 4:14–18. Looking Beyond the Mark

“In the Book of Mormon, Jacob speaks of ancient Judah as having rejected the words of its prophets because individuals living then ‘despised the words of plainness’ and because they ‘sought for things that they could not understand.’ (Jacob 4:14.) Intellectual embroidery seems to have been preferred to the whole clothing of the gospel—the frills to the fabric. In fact, one can even surmise that complexity was preferred over plainness by some because in conceptual complexity there might somehow be escape, or excuse, for noncompliance and for failure. In any event, this incredible blindness which led to the rejection of those

truths spoken by prophets and which prevented the recognition of Jesus for who he was, according to Jacob, came ‘by looking beyond the mark.’ Those who look beyond plainness, beyond the prophets, beyond Christ, and beyond his simple teachings waited in vain then, as they will wait in vain now. For only the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us of things as they *really* are and as they *really* will be. There is more realism in the revelations than in reams of secular research, for secularism is congenitally shortsighted. Without revelation and its absolute anchors, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would also follow the fads of the day, as some churches have done; but as Samuel Callan warned, the church that weds itself to the culture of the day will ‘be a widow within each succeeding age.’ This is but one of the marks of the ‘true and living’ Church: it is spared the fruits of fadism” (Neal A. Maxwell, *On Being a Light* [address delivered at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion, 2 Jan. 1974], p. 1).

Points to Ponder

- Jacob had much to say about the role of a prophet. From Jacob’s teachings, what would you say is the role of a prophet? (see Jacob 1:19; 2:2–11; 3:3–4, 10; 4:4–7).
- Jacob pointed out the sorrow that comes upon families when a family member is involved in immorality. Read Jacob 2:31–35. What did Jacob say are some of the consequences of immorality?
- How does a person obtain spiritual power? (see Jacob 3:1–2, 4:6–12).

Chapter 16

Jacob 5–7

Introduction

Jacob devoted much space to an allegory given by an ancient prophet named Zenos. This allegory reveals the history and destiny of the house of Israel. Jacob also wrote of his confrontation with Sherem, an anti-Christ. Notice the depth of Jacob’s testimony as he confounded Sherem (see Jacob 7).

Notes and Commentary

Jacob 5. The Allegory of the Olive Tree

An allegory uses symbolic representations to convey moral or spiritual ideas. These symbols provide far more significant meaning to the story than appears on the surface. Almost everything in an allegory represents something else. In Zenos’s allegory, for example, the vineyard, the trees, the branches, the master, and the servants all represent realities of greater significance. The value of the allegory lies in understanding what is represented.

“The parable of Zenos, recorded by Jacob in chapter five of his book, is one of the greatest parables ever recorded. This parable in and of itself stamps the Book of Mormon with convincing truth. No mortal man, without the inspiration of the Lord, could have written such a parable. It is a pity that too many of those who read the Book of Mormon pass over and slight the truths which it conveys in relation to the history, scattering, and final gathering of Israel. Such members of the Church unto whom attention has been called to the great significance of this parable have said they fail to comprehend it. It is simple and very clear to the minds of those who earnestly seek to know the truth” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:141).

Jacob 5:1. Zenos

“Zenos [was a] Hebrew prophet, often quoted by the Nephite servants of God. All we are told of his personal history is that he was slain because he testified boldly of what God revealed to him. That he was a man greatly blessed of the Lord with the spirit of prophecy is shown by that wonderful and almost incomparable parable of the vineyard given at length by Jacob (Jacob 5). His prophecies are also quoted by Nephi (I Nephi 19:10, 12, 16), Alma (Alma 33:3, 13,

15), Amulek (Alma 34:7), Samuel, the Lamanite (Helaman 15:11), and Mormon (III Nephi 10:16)” (George Reynolds, in Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:139).

Jacob 5:3. The Symbol of the Olive Tree

The use of the olive tree as a symbol for the house of Israel is an excellent example of how God uses symbolism to teach his children gospel laws and principles. For centuries the olive tree has been associated with peace. War and its grim attendants of destruction—rape of the land, siege, and death—were hardly conducive to the cultivation of olive orchards, that require many years of careful husbandry to bring into full production. When the dove returned to the ark, it carried an olive leaf in its beak, as though to symbolize that God was again at peace with the earth (see Genesis 8:11). The olive branch was used in ancient Greece and Rome to signify peace, and it is still used in that sense in the great seal of the United States where the American eagle is shown grasping an olive branch in its talons. The only true source of peace is Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. His peace comes through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. These laws and ordinances are given to the world through the house of Israel, symbolized by the olive tree. Someone once said that Israel was not chosen to be an *uplifted* people, but an *uplifting* people.

There is further symbolic significance in the cultivation of an olive tree. If the green slip of an olive tree is merely planted and allowed to grow, it develops into the wild olive, a bush that grows without control into a tangle of limbs and branches producing only a small, worthless fruit (see Harold N. and Alma L. Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible*, p. 159). To become the productive “tame” olive tree, the main stem of the wild tree must be cut back completely and a branch from a tame olive tree grafted into the stem of the wild one. With careful pruning and cultivating the tree will begin to produce its first fruit in about seven years, but it will not become fully productive for nearly fifteen years. In other words, the olive tree cannot become productive by itself; it requires grafting by the husbandman to bring it into production. Throughout its history Israel has demonstrated the remarkable aptness characterized by the symbol of the olive tree. When

they gave themselves to their God for pruning and grafting the Israelites prospered and bore much fruit, but when they turned from Christ, the Master of the vineyard, and sought to become their own source of life and sustenance they became wild and unfruitful.

Two other characteristics of the olive tree further illustrate how it is an appropriate symbol for Israel. First, though requiring nearly fifteen years to come into full production, an olive tree may produce fruit for centuries. Some trees now growing in the Holy Land have been producing fruit abundantly for at least four hundred years. The second amazing quality of the tree is that as it finally grows old and begins to die, the roots send up a number of new green shoots that, if grafted and pruned, will mature into full-grown olive trees. The root of the tree will also send up shoots after the tree is cut down. Thus, while the tree itself may produce fruit for centuries, the root of the tree may go on producing fruit and new trees for millennia. It is believed that some of the ancient olive trees located in Israel today have come from trees that were ancient during Christ's mortal ministry. How can Israel be compared to an olive tree, which time and again seems to have been cut down and destroyed, yet, each time a new tree springs forth from the roots?

Zenos was not the only prophet to use the olive tree as a symbol for the chosen people of God. Jeremiah, foreseeing the coming destruction of the Jews by Babylonia, compared the covenant people to a green olive tree consumed by fire (see Jeremiah 11:16). The apostle Paul used a brief allegory almost identical to that of Zenos to warn the Roman Christians against pride as they compared their favored position to that of the Jews (see Romans 11:16–24). In modern revelation, the Lord uses the parable of a vineyard and olive trees to show his will concerning the redemption of Zion (see D&C 101:43–58).

Jacob 5:4–77. Elements of Zenos's Allegory

An allegory or a parable should not be pushed too far in an attempt to correlate every item precisely with some outside reality. However, certain major elements need to be defined if the allegory itself is to be understood. The following items seem important in Zenos's allegory:

<i>Item</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1. The vineyard	1. The world
2. Master of the vineyard	2. Jesus Christ
3. The servant	3. The Lord's prophets
4. Tame olive tree	4. The house of Israel, the Lord's covenant people
5. Wild olive tree	5. Gentiles, or non-Israel (later in the parable, wild branches are apostate Israel)
6. Branches	6. Groups of people
7. The roots of the tame olive tree	7. The gospel covenant and promises made by God that constantly give life and sustenance to the tree
8. Fruit of the tree	8. The lives or works of men
9. Digging, pruning, fertilizing	9. The Lord's work with his children, which seeks to persuade them to be obedient and produce good fruit
10. Transplanting the branches	10. Scattering of groups throughout the world, or restoring them to their original position
11. Grafting	11. The process of spiritual rebirth wherein one is joined to the covenant
12. Decaying branches	12. Wickedness and apostasy
13. Casting the branches into the fire	13. The judgment of God

Jacob 7:1–26. Anti-Christ

An anti-Christ is a person who opposes the Lord. This opposition may come in two ways:

An anti-Christ may set himself up as a savior of the people and offer pseudosalvation based on his own principles, calculated to bring him the honor and glory of the world. Through either word or action the anti-Christ says, "I am the source of salvation and power."

The second way a person can oppose Christ is to set up any other person or system as a substitute for the Savior and then seek to promote this substitute in the hearts and minds of the people. Either way, the result is the same—people are taught to reject the

Master and to seek elsewhere for solutions to spiritual problems.

In Jacob 7 we meet the first of the several anti-Christ's written of in the Book of Mormon. Sherem, like others who followed, was an expert at oratory and flattering words.

Jacob 7:27. “Brethren, *Adieu*”

“Some anti-LDS critics of the Book of Mormon have raised the question as to how Jacob could possibly have used such a word as *adieu* when this word clearly comes from the French language, which was not developed until hundreds of years after the time of Jacob. Such critics evidently overlook the fact that the Book of Mormon is translation literature, and Joseph Smith felt free in his translation to use any words familiar to himself and his readers that would best convey the meaning of the original author. It is interesting to note that there is a Hebrew word *Lehitra'ot*, which has essentially the same meaning in Hebrew as the word *adieu* has in French. Both of these words are much more than a simple farewell; they include the idea of a blessing. Would it be unreasonable to remind these critics that *none of the words* contained in the English translation of the book of Jacob were used by Jacob himself? These words all come from the English language, which did not come into existence until long after Jacob's time!” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 163).

Points to Ponder

- Read President Spencer W. Kimball's message, ““When the World Will Be Converted,”” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, pp. 3–14. You might want to outline this important message.
- Read the account of Jacob and Sherem in Jacob 7. Why was Sherem successful at the beginning of his efforts among the Nephites? Why was Jacob able to confound Sherem?

Chapter 17

Enos, Jarom, Omni, Words of Mormon

Introduction

Despite the relative shortness of the books of Enos, Jarom, Omni, and Words of Mormon, they contain priceless information. The book of Enos contains one of the finest examples of personal religion in the scriptures. Jarom points out some of the spiritual and temporal blessings that come to people striving to do what is right. The book of Omni contains the brief words of many record keepers and provides an overview of the people who lived during that period of the Book of Mormon. Finally, the Words of Mormon offers an explanation of why Mormon included the small plates of Nephi with his abridgment of the large plates of Nephi.

Notes and Commentary

Enos 1:2–4. “Mighty Prayer”

The wrestle Enos had before God was with himself (see Enos 1:2). Sometimes the greatest effort is put forth when a person contends with himself before the Lord. Such wrestling is the struggle to find and express one’s real desires which are sometimes hidden behind sin, evasion, and cover-up. Wrestling with oneself involves deep thought, meditation, and concentration. It means going beyond the cliché level of prayer to the point that one truly pours his soul into words and offers them to God. Repetitions cease to be vain, trite, or unfelt. Instead, each phrase is an expression of a yearning desire to do God’s will. Such prayers are assisted and guided by the Holy Spirit, “for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26).

Enos’s choice of words in Enos 1:3–4 (“sunk deep,” “hungered,” “cried,” “mighty prayer and supplication,” “raise my voice high”) effectively shows his efforts to truly communicate with the Lord.

Enos 1:5–6. “Could Not Lie”

Faith in God’s absolute and perfect truthfulness was a key to Enos’s acceptance of the remission of his sins. Enos said he knew “God could not lie” (Enos 1:6). So when the Lord said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee” (v. 5), Enos believed it.

Joseph Smith taught that a knowledge of the existence of God’s truthfulness is necessary: “And lastly, but not less important to the exercise of faith in God, is the idea of the existence of the attribute truth in him; for without the idea of the existence of this attribute the mind of man could have nothing upon which it could rest with certainty—all would be confusion and doubt. But with the idea of the existence of this attribute in the Deity in the mind, all the teachings, instructions, promises, and blessings, become realities, and the mind is enabled to lay hold of them with certainty and confidence, believing that these things, and all that the Lord has said, shall be fulfilled in their time; and that all the cursings, denunciations, and judgments, pronounced upon the heads of the unrighteous, will also be executed in the due time of the Lord: and, by reason of the truth and veracity of him, the mind beholds its deliverance and salvation as being certain” (*Lectures on Faith* 4:16).

Enos 1:7–8. Peace to the Soul

Enos learned that forgiveness is made possible through faith in the atoning power of Jesus Christ (see Enos 1:8). When complete trust is placed in the Savior, a person repents of his sins and determines to keep all of the Lord’s commandments. Then the Lord, at an appropriate time, speaks peace to the person’s soul.

Enos 1:9–14. “For the Welfare of My Brethren”

After he received a forgiveness of his sins, for whom did Enos next feel a concern? (see Enos 1:9). Enos’s love for the Nephites brought this answer to his prayer: “I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments” (v. 10). As a result of this answer Enos’s “faith began to be unshaken in the Lord” (v. 11), and he prayed for the welfare of the Lamanites. What promise did Enos then receive?

Enos’s example illustrates the expanding concern of a righteous person, first for himself, next for his own people, and finally for his enemies. As it was with Enos, so it is with us. When we obtain a knowledge of our own forgiveness, we become anxious for others to receive the same blessing.

Enos 1:10. “The Voice of the Lord”

“[One] way by which we receive revelation is the way that the Prophet Enos spoke of. After he had gone up and received the great commission to carry on the work and to write the record, he penned this very significant statement in his record in the Book of Mormon. ‘And while I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying . . .’ (Enos 10.) In other words, sometimes we hear the voice of the Lord coming into our minds, and when it comes the impressions are just as strong as though he were talking as with a trumpet into our ear. Jeremiah says something like that in Jeremiah 1:4: ‘Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying . . .’ He was having the voice of the Lord into his mind, as Enos said.

“In the story of the Book of Mormon we have Nephi upbraiding his brothers, calling them to repentance; and in his statement to them he gives voice to the same thought when he says, ‘And he hath spoken unto you in a still, small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words.’ (1 Nephi 17:45.) Thus the Lord, by revelation, brings into our minds as though a voice were speaking.

“May I bear humble testimony, if I may be pardoned, to that fact? I was once in a situation where I needed help. The Lord knew I needed help and I was on an important mission. I was awakened in the hours of the morning—as though someone had wakened me to straighten me out on something that I had planned to do in a contrary course—and there was clearly mapped out before me as I lay there that morning, just as surely as though someone had sat on the edge of my bed and told me what to do. Yes, the voice of the Lord comes into our minds, and we are directed thereby” (Harold B. Lee, *Divine Revelation* [address given to the Brigham Young University student body, 15 Oct. 1952], pp. 7–8).

Enos 1:26–27. Reward for Faithfulness

Enos knew that when he died his Redeemer would accept him into the kingdom of God (see Enos 1:27). Enos’s reward for a life of faithfulness to God was made known to him through “the more sure word of prophecy” (D&C 131:5). The Lord explained through the Prophet Joseph Smith that “the more sure word of prophecy means a man’s knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life” (v. 5).

Jarom 1:1–15. Jarom’s Record

Jarom’s brief addition to the record teaches the following:

Even at this early period, the Nephites who kept the record understood that it would be for the benefit of the Lamanites (see Jarom 1:2).

Apostasy was rampant among the Nephites (see v. 3).

There was a strong group of believers who “had communion with the Holy Spirit” and kept the commandments (see vv. 4–5).

The Nephite laws were exceedingly strict (see v. 5).

The Lamanites were more numerous than the Nephites and had degenerated into a primitive state of existence (see v. 6).

The Nephites were led by righteous men and thus prevailed in battle (see v. 7).

The Nephites had expanded beyond a simple agricultural form of society (see v. 8).

Only constant preaching kept the Nephites from being destroyed by the Lamanites. Jarom recorded that their prophets “did prick their hearts with the word” (v. 12). It was this principle that later motivated Alma to resign his position as chief judge in order to preach the gospel (see Alma 4:19, 31:5).

Omni 1:1–11. Omni, Amaron, Chemish, and Abinadom

The book of Omni begins with a succession of four record keepers in the first eleven verses. In their brief additions to the sacred plates we find a record of growing Nephite apostasy and wickedness. Amaron tells us that because of this wickedness the more wicked part of the Nephites were destroyed (see Omni 1:5).

Omni 1:12–30. The People of Zarahemla

Amaleki recorded information about a second colony of Jews who escaped to the promised land from Jerusalem and became known in the Book of Mormon as the people of Zarahemla. Because Mulek, a son of Zedekiah, King of Judah (see Omni 1:15, Mosiah 25:2, Helaman 6:10), came with them, the group has often been called Mulekites, even though the name is not used in the Book of Mormon. Thus, to the seed of Manasseh through Lehi (see Alma 10:3), and the seed of Ephraim through Ishmael (see Erastus Snow,

Journal of Discourses, 23:184–85), was added the seed of Judah.

Words of Mormon 1:1–18. A Bridge

“The two pages comprising The Words of Mormon are approximately five hundred years out of context. Note that the approximate date at the end of the book of Omni is 130 B.C. whereas the Words of Mormon are dated about 385 A.D. (See 4 Nephi 48 and Mormon 1:2; 6:5 for the major dates in the life of Mormon.) However, the approximate date of the beginning of the book of Mosiah is once again 130 B.C.

“The Words of Mormon were apparently written near the end of Mormon’s life for the purpose of connecting two major records. It was made known to Mormon ‘by the workings of the Spirit of the Lord’ that the small plates of Nephi (which ended when Benjamin was a relatively young man) might be used to replace his abridgment of the book of Lehi [the first book on the large plates of Nephi] (which ended when Benjamin was an old man about ready to die). So that a gap would not occur in the history of the Nephites, Mormon included the major events of the lifetime of King Benjamin in The Words of Mormon, thus connecting the account on the small plates of Nephi with Mormon’s abridgment of the book of Mosiah” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 171).

Words of Mormon 1:7. “For a Wise Purpose”

The Nephites kept two sets of records, each called the plates of Nephi. On the large plates of Nephi they recorded their secular history, and on the small plates of Nephi they recorded primarily their sacred history (see 1 Nephi 9:2–4).

Nephi did not make the small plates until the Lord told him to do so, some thirty years after Lehi’s colony had left Jerusalem (see 2 Nephi 5:28–31). Nephi did not understand why he was to make a second set of records, but he had faith that it was “for a wise purpose in him [the Lord], which purpose I know not” (1 Nephi 9:5). Nearly a thousand years later, the prophet Mormon echoed words similar to Nephi’s when he testified that along with his abridgment of the large plates of Nephi he was including the small plates of Nephi “for a wise purpose” (Words of Mormon 1:7).

Joseph Smith started the translation of the Book of Mormon with Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi. He had completed 116 manuscript

pages when Martin Harris pleaded with Joseph to let him take the manuscript and show it to family members. Joseph pleaded with the Lord and eventually Martin’s request was granted. The manuscript fell into the hands of wicked men (see D&C 10:8) and became known as the “Lost Manuscript.”

The loss of the manuscript makes it apparent why the Lord commanded Nephi and Mormon to do what they did. Joseph Smith was told not to retranslate the portion he had already completed, but to translate the small plates of Nephi (see vv. 30, 38–45).

“The Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men” (1 Nephi 9:6). The Lord inspired Nephi and Mormon to do the necessary things that would allow his work to be accomplished by Joseph Smith, even though they were all separated from each other by hundreds of years.

Points to Ponder

- What price would you be willing to pay to know God—not to just know about him, but to really know him? What would the essential ingredients of that price be? Enos answered all of these questions from personal experience. He gave us the formula for knowing God and acquiring a deep love for him and his children. Analyze the book of Enos and develop your personal formula for knowing God.
- How are you progressing with the Savior’s admonition to love your enemies (see Matthew 5:44)? The following scriptures demonstrate some of the ways people in the Book of Mormon showed love for their enemies: Jacob 7:24–25, Enos 1:9–14, Jarom 1:2, Moroni 1:1–4. What can you do to show more love for enemies you may have?
- The book of Omni contains a valuable history. Read Omni 1:12–23 and identify the three civilizations being discussed. Identify which civilization each person mentioned belonged to.

Chapter 18

Mosiah 1–3

Introduction

Benjamin became king following the reign of his father, Mosiah, who led the Nephites from the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla. With the aid of other holy prophets, King Benjamin established peace throughout the land in his day. At the beginning of the book of Mosiah, King Benjamin is nearing the end of his illustrious life. His final sermon is one of the most stirring and significant sermons in the Book of Mormon.

Notes and Commentary

Mosiah 1:1–2. A Shift From the First Person Account of the First Books in the Book of Mormon to the Third Person Account of Mosiah

“Note that the main story in the book of Mosiah is told in the third person rather than in the first person as was the custom in the earlier books of the Book of Mormon. The reason for this is that someone else is now telling the story, and that ‘someone else’ is Mormon. With the beginning of the book of Mosiah we start our study of Mormon’s abridgment of various books that had been written on the large plates of Nephi. (3 Nephi 5:8–12.) The book of Mosiah and the five books that follow—Alma, Helaman, 3 Nephi, 4 Nephi, and Mormon—were all abridged or condensed by Mormon from the large plates of Nephi, and these abridged versions were written by Mormon on the plates that bear his name, the plates of Mormon” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 173).

Mosiah 1:11–18. A Name for King Benjamin’s People

King Benjamin spoke of giving his people a name to distinguish them “above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem” (Mosiah 1:11); a name that would never “be blotted out, except it be through transgression” (v. 12). What was the name King Benjamin wanted to give his people? (see Mosiah 5:7–12).

Mosiah 2:9–18. A Clear Conscience Before God

In Mosiah 2:9–18, King Benjamin briefly reported his stewardship to the Nephites. His words lead to pondering on how few political leaders in the history

of the world could stand before their people and say, “I can answer a clear conscience before God this day” (v. 15). King Benjamin’s son Mosiah, another great prophet-king, later said, “If ye could have men for your kings who would do even as my father Benjamin did for this people—I say unto you, if this could always be the case then it would be expedient that ye should always have kings to rule over you” (Mosiah 29:13).

Mosiah 2:17. “Learn Wisdom”

King Benjamin’s comment about service to fellowmen (see Mosiah 2:17) suggests in beautiful simplicity the doctrine taught by the Savior: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

Regarding service to others, Elder Antoine R. Ivins said: “The great value, I believe, that the Church has for us is the opportunity it gives us to serve, for, after all, the great benefits of life come from service. Generous, open-hearted, full service to our fellows, I believe, is the thing which brings us the greatest happiness. We can serve our families and gain happiness by it; we can serve our friends and gain happiness by it; but if we would be happy we must serve and serve generously, and I believe myself that the greatest happiness that comes to me from observing the standards of the Church and meeting my obligations to it is the spiritual values that I get out of that service. I would like to be able to say that I always serve for the sheer love of service. I don’t know whether I can honestly say that or not, but I hope I can. I would like to suggest that all of us who serve, serve for the same motive, out of sheer joy and love of service. I would that every man who accepts a responsibility in a priesthood quorum would accept it because of the opportunity for service which it offers him; not that he be a good deacon so he may be the president of his quorum. Not that he be a good priest that some day he may be made president of the elders’ quorum. Not to be a good bishop, that when the stake is reorganized he may become the president of the stake, because if he serves with that motive, there is very likely to be a day of disappointment for him, but if he serves because he loves to, if he serves because he loves his fellows, then whether the other things

come or not, he is never disappointed” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1948, pp. 47–48).

Mosiah 2:24 “Indebted unto Him”

“I believe that one of the greatest sins of which the inhabitants of the earth are guilty today is the sin of ingratitude, the want of acknowledgement, on their part, of God and his right to govern and control. We see a man raised up with extraordinary gifts, or with great intelligence, and he is instrumental in developing some great principle. He and the world ascribe his great genius and wisdom to himself. He attributes his success to his own energies, labor and mental capacity. He does not acknowledge the hand of God in anything connected with his success, but ignores him altogether and takes the honor to himself; this will apply to almost all the world. In all the great modern discoveries in science, in the arts, in mechanics, and in all material advancement of the age, the world says, ‘We have done it.’ The individual says, ‘I have done it,’ and he gives no honor or credit to God. Now, I read in the revelations through Joseph Smith, the prophet, that because of this, God is not pleased with the inhabitants of the earth but is angry with them because they will not acknowledge his hand in all things” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 270–71).

“We are not our own, we are bought with a price, we are the Lord’s; our time, our talents, our gold and silver, our wheat and fine flour, our wine and our oil, our cattle, and all there is on this earth that we have in our possession is the Lord’s. . . .

“. . . There is no man who ever made a sacrifice on this earth for the Kingdom of heaven, that I know anything about, except the Savior. He drank the bitter cup to the dregs, and tasted for every man and for every woman, and redeemed the earth and all things upon it. But he was God in the flesh, or he could not have endured it. ‘But we suffer, we sacrifice, we give something, we have preached so long.’ What for? ‘Why, for the Lord.’ I would not give the ashes of a rye straw for the man who feels that he is making sacrifice for God. We are doing this for our own happiness, welfare and exaltation, and for nobody else’s. This is the fact, and what we do, we do for the salvation of the inhabitants of the earth, not for the salvation of the heavens, the angels, or the Gods” (Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, pp. 176–77).

Mosiah 2:27–32. Not Accountable for the Sins of the Nephites

The prophets are among the most effective in using symbolism. King Benjamin’s comment about his people’s blood not coming upon him (see Mosiah 2:27–28) is a metaphor for his not being held accountable for the behavior of the people, since he had taught them all of the things that the Lord required of him (see Jacob 1:18–19). His allegorical statement about the choirs in heaven (see Mosiah 2:28) is another example of revealed spiritual truths. King Benjamin longed to be among those who, after their mortal probation, could by deed and by word praise God in a heavenly anthem (see 1 Nephi 1:8).

Mosiah 2:34–41. Consequences of Sin

King Benjamin clearly defined the consequences of sin (see Mosiah 2:36–40). When a person knows what is right and does not do it, he not only violates the actual law but also puts himself in a state of opposition to God. This person becomes “an enemy to all righteousness” (v. 37), one of the problems of the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19).

The testimony of King Benjamin and of all the prophets is that one really serves himself as he serves the Lord. Sin leads to misery, suffering, and loss of agency (see 2 Nephi 2:27–29, Alma 41:10, D&C 19:15–20).

Mosiah 2:38. Eternal Punishment

“Eternal punishment, or endless punishment, does not mean that those who partake of it must endure it forever. ‘It is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written *endless torment*. Again, it is written *eternal damnation*; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name’s glory. . . . Behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it! For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore—Eternal punishment is God’s punishment. Endless punishment is God’s punishment.’ [D&C 19:6–12.]

“The laws of God are immutable, and from this explanation we learn that the same punishment always follows the same offense, according to the laws of God who is eternal and endless, hence it is called, *endless punishment*, and *eternal punishment*, because it is the punishment which God has fixed according to unchangeable law. A man may partake of endless torment, and when he has paid the penalty for his

transgression, he is released, but the punishment remains and awaits the next culprit, and so on forever” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:228).

Mosiah 3:19. The Natural Man

The word *natural*, when applied to man, is used differently in the scriptures than it is by the world. Usually *natural*, or *by nature*, indicates an inherent part of our makeup, something we are born with. The scriptures, however, clearly teach that *natural* man means fallen or sinful man.

Though born innocent (see D&C 93:38), all men, through the fall of Adam, are born into a fallen world. Knowing good and evil (see Moses 4:11, 5:11) and living in this imperfect state, all men sin (see Romans 3:23, 1 John 1:8–10) and experience a resultant “fall” and spiritual death (see Moses 6:49, 55, Alma 42:9). In other words, it is through transgression of God’s law that one becomes a “natural man” (see Mosiah 16:2–3, Alma 42:10–12, D&C 20:20). Hence, a natural man is an enemy to God until he qualifies for the cleansing influence of the Atonement by living the commandments of God (see Mosiah 3:11–12, 19). Man then becomes a new creature, being born again, and becoming spiritually alive (see John 3:3–8, Mosiah 27:25–26) and worthy to be known as a friend of God (see John 15:14).

Points to Ponder

- How is the Words of Mormon a good example of the omniscience of God? (see headings to Doctrine and Covenants 3, 10).
- As you reflect upon what you have studied so far in Mosiah, it should be evident that every person is indebted to God. What has God done for us? (see Mosiah 2:20–21, 23–24; 3:7, 11). What does God require of us in return? (see Mosiah 2:17, 22, 31–34). Recalling Nephi’s declaration in 2 Nephi 25:23, is it any wonder that we are saved by grace after all we can do?

Chapter 19

Mosiah 4–8

Introduction

As you study this portion of the Book of Mormon, you will learn what is required to become a son or daughter of Jesus Christ. You must ask yourself if you are willing to pay the price to receive this glorious blessing. And then, as King Benjamin counseled, “If you believe all these things see that ye do them” (Mosiah 4:10).

From a historical perspective, you will learn about King Mosiah sending Ammon to the land of Lehi-Nephi. There Ammon discovered Limhi and his Nephite colony were in bondage to the Lamanites.

Notes and Commentary

Mosiah 4:1–2. “Their Own Carnal State”

“Since the fall, all men have become carnal, sensual and devilish by nature. (Moses 5:13; 6:49; Alma 42:10; Mosiah 16:1–4; D. & C. 20:20.) In this fallen state they are subject to the lusts, passions, and appetites of the flesh. They are spiritually dead, having been cast out of the presence of the Lord; and thus ‘they are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God.’ They are in a ‘carnal state’ (Alma 41:10–11); they are of the world. *Carnality* connotes worldliness, sensuality, and inclination to gratify the flesh” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 113).

Mosiah 4:2. “Less Than the Dust of the Earth”

Helaman 12:7–8 shows how people “in their own carnal state [are] even less than the dust of the earth” (Mosiah 4:2). The dust obeys God’s commands, but carnal man rebels against them.

Mosiah 4:2–3. “Filled with Joy”

“Some years ago, President Marion G. Romney and I were sitting in my office. The door opened and a fine young man came in with a troubled look on his face, and he said, ‘Brethren, I am going to the temple for the first time tomorrow. I have made some mistakes in the past, and I have gone to my bishop and my stake president, and I have made a clean disclosure of it all; and after a period of repentance and assurance that I have not returned again to those mistakes, they have now adjudged me ready to go to the temple. But,

brethren, that is not enough. I want to know, and how can I know, that the Lord has forgiven me also.’

“What would you answer one who might come to you asking that question? As we pondered for a moment, we remembered King Benjamin’s address contained in the book of Mosiah. Here was a group of people asking for baptism, and they said they viewed themselves in their carnal state:

“ . . . And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; . . .

“ . . . after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience. . . .’ (Mosiah 4:2–3.)

“There was the answer.

“If the time comes when you have done all that you can to repent of your sins, whoever you are, wherever you are, and have made amends and restitution to the best of your ability; if it be something that will affect your standing in the Church and you have gone to the proper authorities, then you will want that confirming answer as to whether or not the Lord has accepted of you. In your soul-searching, if you seek for and you find that peace of conscience, by that token you may know that the Lord has accepted of your repentance. Satan would have you think otherwise and sometimes persuade you that now having made one mistake, you might go on and on with no turning back. That is one of the great falsehoods. The miracle of forgiveness is available to all of those who turn from their evil doings and return no more, because the Lord has said in a revelation to us in our days: ‘ . . . go your ways and sin no more; but unto that soul who sinneth [meaning again] shall the former sins return, saith the Lord your God.’ (D&C 82:7.) Have that in mind, all of you who may be troubled with a burden of sin” (Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places*, pp. 184–85).

Mosiah 4:3. A Sign of Conversion

“Somebody recently asked how one could know when he is converted. The answer is simple. He may be assured of it when by the power of the Holy Spirit

his soul is healed. When this occurs, he will recognize it by the way he feels, for he will feel as the people of Benjamin felt when they received remission of sins. The record says, ‘ . . . the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, . . . ’ (Mosiah 4:3.)” (Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, p. 25).

Mosiah 4:4–8. “A Sense of Your Nothingness”

When King Benjamin spoke of man’s nothingness (see Mosiah 4:5), he was speaking of man’s utter dependence upon God. Man must rely upon God for everything: life and breath, food and the ability to produce it, health and strength, salvation and eternal life. Without God and the Atonement, man is, in a very real sense, nothing. Humility comes from realizing our dependence upon the Lord.

Mosiah 4:7. “Salvation, through the Atonement”

“Without it [the atonement of the Savior], no man or woman would ever be resurrected. From Adam’s time to the time of Jesus, men died—millions of them. But not a single one of them ever came out of the grave as a resurrected person until that glorious morning when Jesus was resurrected. Without his victory over death, they never would have come out of their graves, worlds without end. It took the atonement of Jesus Christ to reunite the bodies and spirits of men in the Resurrection. And so all the world, believers and nonbelievers, are indebted to the Redeemer for their certain resurrection, because the Resurrection will be as wide as was the Fall, which brought death to every man.

“There is another phase of the Atonement which makes me love the Savior even more and fills my soul with gratitude beyond expression. It is that in addition to atoning for Adam’s transgression, thereby bringing about the Resurrection, the Savior by his suffering paid the debt for the personal sins of every living soul that ever dwelt upon the earth or that ever will dwell in mortality upon the earth. But this he did conditionally. The benefits of this suffering for our individual transgressions will not come to us unconditionally in the same sense that the Resurrection will come regardless of what we do. If we partake of the blessings of the Atonement as far as our individual transgressions are concerned, we must obey the law.

“ . . . When we commit sin, we are estranged from God and rendered unfit to enter into his presence. No unclean thing can enter into his presence. We cannot of ourselves, no matter how we may try, rid ourselves

of the stain which is upon us as a result of our own transgressions. That stain must be washed away by the blood of the Redeemer, and he has set up the way by which that stain may be removed. That way is the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Marion G. Romney, “We Cannot Rid Ourselves of Our Transgressions,” *New Era*, Apr. 1983, p. 47).

Mosiah 4:11–12. Retaining a Remission of Sins

In Mosiah 4:11, King Benjamin equates receiving a remission of sins with four things: coming to a knowledge of the glory of God, knowing of His goodness, tasting of His love, and receiving great joy in our souls. How do these things relate to what Nephi saw as the interpretation of the tree of life? (see 1 Nephi 11:8–23).

King Benjamin also explained what we can do to retain a remission of sins (see Mosiah 4:11): always remember the greatness of God, be humble by remembering our dependence upon God, call on the name of the Lord daily, and stand steadfast in the faith.

King Benjamin said that those who do these things will grow in the knowledge of the glory of God.

Mosiah 4:13–16. Characteristics of the Righteous

King Benjamin described the following characteristics of people who are filled with the Spirit of God: they will seek to live peaceably with one another (see Mosiah 4:13); they will fulfill their sacred family responsibilities (see vv. 14–15); they will succor the needy (see v. 16). (The word *succor* means to give aid, help, or relief.)

In verse 14 King Benjamin also teaches that fighting and quarreling between brothers and sisters is not necessarily a normal and healthy part of child development. Such contention may be normal for the “natural man,” but King Benjamin warned that the source of such contention is the devil.

Mosiah 4:16–25. Give to the Needy and Poor

Read Mosiah 4:16–25. What did King Benjamin say about the rationalization to not give aid to the needy because their condition is their own fault? How are we all beggars?

King Benjamin said that the rich should give to the needy, and the poor should not covet. We often think of coveting only as desiring something someone else has, but basically coveting is setting one’s heart on the things of the world more than on the things of God. Martin Harris was warned against coveting his own property (see D&C 19:26). We can even be guilty of

coveting or holding back what we haven't received (see Mosiah 4:25). Coveting is an attitude toward material things, whether they belong to someone else, whether they are our own possessions, or whether they are just material things in general.

Mosiah 4:26–29. “Walk Guiltless before God”

“As we travel and visit the people throughout the world, we recognize the great temporal needs of our people. And as we long to help them, we realize the vital importance of their learning this great lesson: that the highest achievement of spirituality comes as we conquer the flesh. We build character as we encourage people to care for their own needs.

“As givers gain control of their desires and properly see other needs in light of their own wants, then the powers of the gospel are released in their lives. They learn that by living the great law of consecration they insure not only temporal salvation but also spiritual sanctification.

“And as a recipient receives with thanksgiving, he rejoices in knowing that in its purest form—in the true Zion—one may partake of both temporal and spiritual salvation. Then they are motivated to become self-sustaining and able to share with others.

“Isn't the plan beautiful? Don't you thrill to this part of the gospel that causes Zion to put on her beautiful garments? When viewed in this light, we can see that Welfare Services is not a program, but the essence of the gospel. *It is the gospel in action.*

“It is the crowning principle of a Christian life” (Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, pp. 123–24; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 77).

Mosiah 5:2. “A Mighty Change in . . . Our Hearts”

President Joseph F. Smith, speaking about the “mighty change” recorded in Mosiah 5:2, said: “What a glorious condition was this! a condition in which the Lord God Omnipotent, by the power of His Spirit, had wrought a mighty change in the hearts of that people, that they no longer had any desire to do evil, but were filled only with a fervent desire to do that which was good. This was indeed a great change, and yet it is precisely that change that comes today to every son and daughter of God who repents of his or her sins, who humble themselves before the Lord, and who seek forgiveness and remission of sin by baptism by immersion, by one having authority to administer the sacred ordinance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . I speak of the influence and power of the Holy Spirit that I experienced when I had been baptized for the

remission of my sins. The feeling that came upon me was that of pure peace, of love and of light. I felt in my soul that if I had sinned—and surely I was not without sin—that it had been forgiven me; that I was indeed cleansed from sin; my heart was touched and I felt that I would not injure the smallest insect beneath my feet. I felt as though I wanted to do good everywhere to everybody and to everything. I felt a newness of life, a newness of desire to do that which was right. There was not one particle of desire for evil left in my soul. I was but a little boy, it is true, when I was baptized; but this was the influence that came upon me, and I know that it was from God, and was and ever has been a living witness to me of my acceptance of the Lord” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, pp. 65–66).

Mosiah 5:3–6. Faith through Hearing the Word

Joseph Smith said: “Faith comes by hearing the word of God, through the testimony of the servants of God; that testimony is always attended by the Spirit of prophecy and revelation” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 148). This was the pattern followed in the conversion of King Benjamin's people (see Mosiah 5:4). Following this conversion, the people said they were willing to enter into a covenant relationship with the Lord to do his will (see v. 5).

Mosiah 5:7. Children of Christ

President Joseph Fielding Smith spoke on how Jesus Christ could be called our Father:

“If we speak of Jesus Christ as being our Father, we are not making any mistake because, spiritually, he begot us. No question about it—he united spirit and body, providing a resurrection for every living thing. We do not make any mistake in speaking of the Savior as our God, as our Father, and also as the Son of God because he received all authority. Jesus declared the Father conferred all authority upon him, and so he becomes to us a Father. Moreover, he begot us spiritually in the resurrection. . . .

“. . . We are his sons and daughters. He is a Father to us because he begot us and saved us from death, uniting spirit and body. What is a father but one who gives life?” (*The Fatherhood of Christ* [address to seminary and institute of religion personnel, Brigham Young University, 17 July 1962], pp. 5–6).

Elohim—Our Heavenly Father	Our Earthly Father	Jesus Christ—Our Savior and Spiritual Father
1. We were born of an eternal Heavenly Father.	1. Each of us had an earthly father who gave us mortal life and thus became our physical father.	1. Jesus Christ is he who gives us immortality beyond the grave through the Resurrection. Since that is true for all men, he is the Father of all the family of God.
2. We acquired spiritual qualities and characteristics from God.	2. We have acquired earthly qualities and characteristics from him.	2. We can be spiritually reborn through the sanctifying influence of the Atonement; hence, for all who will repent, be baptized, and endure faithfully to the end by following the Spirit, Christ becomes their father.
3. All of us are now spirit sons or daughters of God and have part of his divine nature in us.	3. We bear his name and have part of his nature in us.	3. Through rebirth we acquire distinct Christlike qualities, partake of his divine nature, and become his son or daughter.
4. Can you see the reasonable basis for belief that you can become a God like he is by progressing here and hereafter?	4. Consider the reasonable truth that you possess many of his characteristics and can become like him.	4. We now take upon ourselves a new name, even the name of Jesus Christ. Do you understand that you have the qualities and power to become like him through this “mighty change” called spiritual rebirth?

Mosiah 5:8. “The Name of Christ”

“We see that we take upon us the name of Christ when we are baptized in his name, when we belong to his Church and profess our belief in him, and when we do the work of his kingdom. . . .

“There are other meanings as well, deeper meanings that the more mature members of the Church should understand and ponder as he or she partakes of the sacrament.

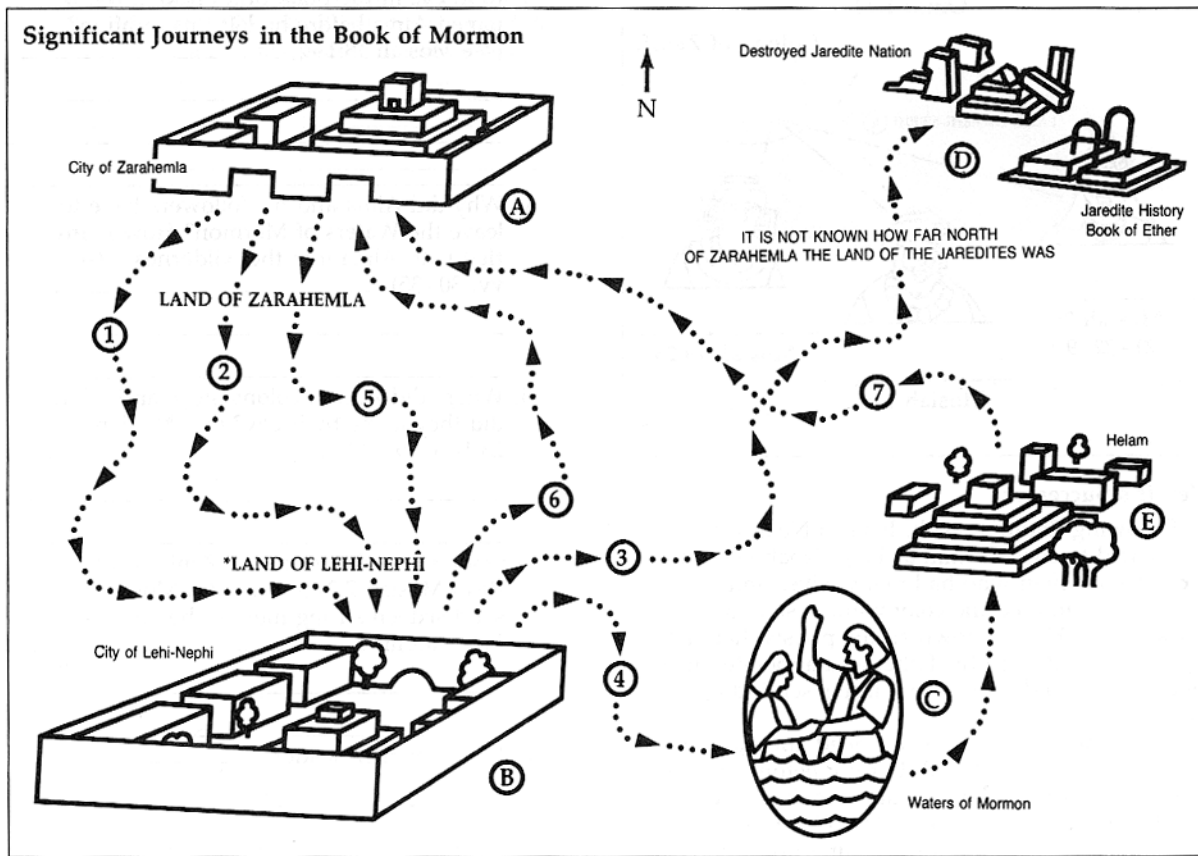
“It is significant that when we partake of the sacrament we do not witness that we *take upon us* the name of Jesus Christ. We witness that we are *willing* to do so. (See D&C 20:77.) The fact that we only witness to our willingness suggests that something else must happen before we actually take that sacred name upon us in the most important sense.

“What future event or events could this covenant contemplate? The scriptures suggest two sacred possibilities, one concerning the authority of God,

especially as exercised in the temples, and the other—closely related—concerning exaltation in the celestial kingdom. . . .

“Willingness to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ can therefore be understood as willingness to take upon us the authority of Jesus Christ. According to this meaning, by partaking of the sacrament we witness our willingness to participate in the sacred ordinances of the temple and to receive the highest blessings available through the name and by the authority of the Savior when he chooses to confer them upon us. . . .

“. . . Our willingness to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ affirms our commitment to do all that we can to be counted among those whom he will choose to stand at his right hand and be called by his name at the last day. In this sacred sense, our witness that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ constitutes our declaration of candidacy for exaltation in the celestial kingdom. Exaltation is eternal life, ‘the



greatest of all the gifts of God' (D&C 14:7)" (Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, pp. 102–3, 105; or *Ensign*, May 1985, pp. 80–81, 83).

Mosiah 6:4–7. King Mosiah

King Benjamin named his son after his father. We might, therefore, refer to King Benjamin's father as Mosiah I and to King Benjamin's son as Mosiah II. It was Mosiah I who was commanded by the Lord to take those who would follow him and depart out of the land of Nephi into the wilderness because of the wickedness of the Nephites (see Omni 1:12). The book of Mosiah, however, is named after Mosiah II. He is the one who kept the record.

Mosiah 7:1–14, 8:7–21. Nephite Journeys

Using the map "Significant Journeys in the Book of Mormon" locate the city of Zarahemla (A) and Zeniff's colony in the land of Lehi-Nephi (B). Also locate the following journeys between Zarahemla and the land of Lehi-Nephi:

- The ill-fated expedition (1)
- Zeniff's expedition (2)
- The expedition of forty-three men to find Zarahemla (3)

Alma's escape (4) to the Waters of Mormon (C) and the establishment of the city of Helam (E)

- Ammon's expedition to find Zeniff's colony (5)
- Limhi's escape to Zarahemla (6)
- Alma's escape to Zarahemla (7)

The following material can be used to help you with this exercise:

1. The ill-fated expedition:
 - a. Read Omni 1:27–28. About 200 B.C. a large number of Nephites wanted to possess the land of their inheritance.
 - b. Read Mosiah 9:1. Who was the man sent to spy on the Lamanites? _____
 - c. Read Omni 1:28 and Mosiah 9:2. What caused the contention among the group after Zeniff made his report? _____
 - d. What was the fate of this expedition? _____

2. Zeniff's expedition:

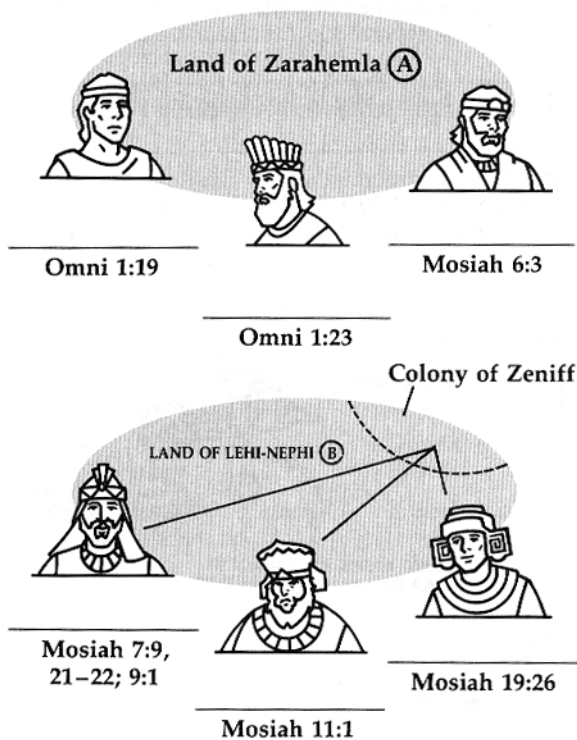
- a. Read Omni 1:29 and Mosiah 9:3. Why did Zeniff organize a second group to go to the land of Nephi? _____

- b. Why did Zeniff's expedition meet with much affliction? (see Mosiah 9:3). _____

- c. Read Mosiah 9:4–7. Zeniff entered into a treaty with the Lamanites. The Lamanite king (Laman) commanded the Lamanites who inhabited the land of _____ to evacuate. See the approximate location on the map.
- d. Read Mosiah 7:9. Who was the first king of this new colony? _____

At this point it will be helpful to understand who the kings were during the period 200–121 B.C. Identify the kings of the land of Zarahemla and the land of Lehi-Nephi by reading the references on the map "Kings—200–121 B.C." and then filling in the names.

Kings—200–121 B.C.



Zeniff's Successor

Following Zeniff's death, his son Noah was appointed to succeed him as king. Noah was an unrighteous man who had many wives and concubines and led the colony into a state of wickedness. He put down all the priests that had been consecrated by his father and appointed new ones who would sustain him in his self-indulgent ways.

When the prophet Abinadi called attention to his sins, Noah had him killed, but not before Abinadi delivered a scathing rebuke and prophesied of Noah's death (see Mosiah 17:11–20). Present in the court of Noah that day was a young priest named Alma, who had been appointed by Noah. Believing the words of Abinadi, he pleaded with Noah to spare him, but the other priests prevailed. Alma was forced to flee, and while in hiding he recorded the words of Abinadi.

3. The expedition of forty-three men to find Zarahemla (see Mosiah 8):
 - a. Who was the successor to wicked King Noah?

 - b. Forty-three men were sent into the wilderness. What was the purpose of this expedition?

 - c. What did this group discover? (see vv. 8–9).

 - d. What did they think they had found? (see Mosiah 21:26–27). _____

4. Alma's escape to the Waters of Mormon and the establishment of the city of Helam:
 - a. Abinadi's words helped to convert Alma, one of the priests of Noah. How did King Noah react to Alma's conversion? (see Mosiah 17:3). _____

b. Alma fled to the Waters of Mormon. Locate this on the map “Significant Journeys in the Book of Mormon.” Who joined Alma before he left this location? (see Mosiah 18:1–7, 30).

c. Why did Alma and his followers have to leave the Waters of Mormon? How many fled with Alma into the wilderness? (see vv. 30–35).

d. Where did Alma’s colony stop, and what did they name their city? (see Mosiah 23:1–5, 19–20).

5. Ammon’s expedition to find Zeniff’s colony:

a. Read Mosiah 7:2–3. Why did Mosiah II send sixteen strong men to the land of Lehi-Nephi?

b. Who was their leader? _____

c. Ammon learned about the expedition of the forty-three men and their discovery of twenty-four gold plates. How did Ammon say these records could be translated? (see Mosiah 8:12–18).

6. Limhi’s escape to Zarahemla:

a. Ammon and his brethren, and King Limhi and his people, studied diligently to find a means of escaping from the Lamanites. Who proposed the plan for escape? (see Mosiah 22:3–4).

b. What was the plan? (see vv. 5–8).

c. What happened to Limhi’s group after the escape? (see vv. 10–13).

7. Alma’s escape to Zarahemla:

Alma’s colony was discovered by the Lamanite army who became lost while pursuing Limhi’s group. The Lamanite king appointed the leader of King Noah’s priests to rule Alma’s colony (see Mosiah 23:25–39). What did the Lord do to enable Alma and his people to escape? (see Mosiah 24).

Mosiah 8:15–21. “A Revelator and a Prophet”

In Mosiah 8:15–21, Ammon told of the great benefit that comes to men through having a seer among the people. Because a seer has the gift of seeing both the past and the future as well as revealing hidden things, he “becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings” (v. 18). Such hidden things might include impending judgments on a city, nation, or people; warnings about the consequences of sin; explanations of blessings for obedience; and definitions of important gospel principles. In an age of doubt, fear, and uncertainty such as we live in today, to have one who can “see” the course which leads us to peace and joy is a blessing to be treasured.

Points to Ponder

- Why is King Benjamin's sermon so powerful? (see Mosiah 2–5). How can these teachings help you become a better person?
- What is meant by becoming a son or daughter of Jesus Christ? (see D&C 25:1).
- Cross-reference Mosiah 4:14–15 and Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28. What responsibilities do parents have? What might be the consequences of a parent neglecting his or her duty?
- A group of Nephites, led by Zeniff, fell into bondage to the Lamanites. Why did this happen? (see Mosiah 7:25). What is the relationship between the actions of the people in the land of Lehi-Nephi and the actions of the Saints in Missouri? (see D&C 101:2, 6–9).

Chapter 20

Mosiah 9–17

Introduction

Zeniff established a Nephite colony in the Lamanite land of Lehi-Nephi and was succeeded as king by his wicked son Noah. The prophet Abinadi boldly testified of Christ and warned Noah and his people of the judgments of God that would come upon them if they did not repent. Abinadi was put to death by Noah and his wicked priests, but not before he delivered some of the greatest teachings found in the Book of Mormon.

Notes and Commentary

Mosiah 9. “The Land of Our Fathers’ First Inheritance”

Zeniff and his people left Zarahemla to return to the land of Nephi during the reign of Mosiah I, the father of King Benjamin (see Omni 1:12). Many years later, during the reign of King Benjamin’s son Mosiah II, Ammon went to the land of Nephi to see what had happened to Zeniff’s people because they had not been heard from for so long (see Mosiah 7:1–2). This is not the Ammon who was one of the four sons of Mosiah II.

Mosiah 11:2. Concubines and Whoredoms

Concubines in the Old Testament “were considered to be *secondary wives*, that is, wives who did not have the same standing in the caste system then prevailing as did those wives who were not called concubines” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 154). Concubines had full protection as wives and did not violate the law of chastity when the marriages were approved by the Lord (see D&C 132:34–43). In the time of King Noah, however, the word *concubine* referred to the wicked practice of a man living with more than one woman, in or out of marriage, without God’s approval.

The word *whoredoms* refers to any perversion of the laws of chastity and virtue.

Mosiah 11:3–15. Wicked King Noah

In Mosiah 11:3–15 we get a vivid picture of the depravity engaged in and encouraged by King Noah.

The metal ziff (see v. 3) is now unknown. In Hebrew this term means brightness, referring to

metallic brightness (see v. 3*b*). The term is also used in Daniel 2:31 and 4:36, where it is translated as “brightness.”

Mosiah 11:15 indicates that King Noah was a winebibber. The word *imbibe* means to drink or absorb; therefore, a winebibber is one who indulges in excessive wine drinking. Today we would use the word *drunkard* to describe this kind of person.

Mosiah 11:16–19. Scourged by the Lamanites

The Lord told Nephi that if the day ever came that the Nephites rebelled against the commandments, the Lamanites would be given power to scourge the Nephites “to stir them up in the ways of remembrance” (see 1 Nephi 2:21–24). What happened to King Noah’s people was a literal fulfillment of this prophecy.

Mosiah 11:20–29. Unacceptable to God

Nephi told his wicked brothers that “the guilty taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center” (1 Nephi 16:2). This is why King Noah and his priests sought the life of Abinadi, just as the Jews in Jerusalem had sought to take away Lehi’s life (see 1 Nephi 1:19–20), and the wicked people of Zarahemla would seek to kill Samuel (see Helaman 16).

False prophets and corrupt priests so often flourish among a wicked people because they soothe the conscience. They not only teach that there is no wickedness in the people’s actions, but they actually approve these acts as acceptable to God (see 2 Nephi 28:8, Helaman 13:24–28).

Mosiah 12:1–8. Fulfillment of Prophecy

Mosiah 12:2–7 foreshadows what was to happen to King Noah and his people. Abinadi’s prophecy about King Noah is fulfilled in Mosiah 19, and the prophecy about the people is fulfilled in Mosiah 21.

Mosiah 12:9–37. Unwise and Wicked Priests

When the wicked priests took Abinadi before King Noah they used flattery to influence the king’s judgment against the prophet (see Mosiah 12:9–16). They then used the same tactics that the Sanhedrin would use on the Savior. They attempted to “cross

[Abinadi]” in his words in order to find something to accuse him of (see Mark 14:55–64).

King Noah’s priests challenged Abinadi with a statement from Isaiah. Abinadi showed that their ignorance of Isaiah’s words was due to their wickedness. He later explained that Isaiah’s words as quoted in Mosiah 12:21 referred to the Savior, and in verse 22 to those who were called to bear witness of the Savior (see Mosiah 15:10–18).

Mosiah 13:1–10. “Protected by Divine Power”

Abinadi knew that he would be protected and live long enough to fulfill his ministry and deliver the message the Lord had sent him to deliver (see Mosiah 13:3).

The Prophet Joseph Smith also received this assurance. Joseph Smith, Sr., called his children to his bedside shortly before his death to give them his final blessing. To Joseph, Jr., he said: “‘Joseph, my son, you are called to a high and holy calling. You are even called to do the work of the Lord. Hold out faithful and you shall be blest and your children after you. You shall even live to finish your work.’ At this Joseph cried out, weeping, ‘Oh! my father, shall I?’ ‘Yes,’ said his father, ‘you shall live to lay out the plan of all the work which God has given you to do. This is my dying blessing upon your head in the name of Jesus. I also confirm your former blessing upon your head; for it shall be fulfilled. Even so. Amen.’” (in Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 309–10).

At the funeral of Elder Richard L. Evans, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, President Joseph Fielding Smith said, “No righteous man is ever taken before his time” (“Funeral Services for Elder Richard L. Evans,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, p. 10).

Mosiah 13:11–26. The Ten Commandments

Some may wonder how Abinadi could have read the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses. It should be remembered that the brass plates Nephi obtained contained the five books of Moses (see 1 Nephi 5:10–11). This record, which would have contained the Ten Commandments, had been passed down by Nephite prophets and record keepers. Evidently the contents of the brass plates were known to Noah and his priests because they quoted from Isaiah and referred to the law of Moses (see Mosiah 12:20–24, 28).

Mosiah 14:1–12. Isaiah’s Messianic Prophecy

In setting before the priests of Noah the relationship of the law of Moses to the coming Messiah, Abinadi quoted what is now Isaiah 53. A careful analysis of this Messianic writing reveals that Isaiah had a clear understanding of the mission and suffering of the Savior more than seven hundred years before His birth.

Mosiah 15:1–4. “Being the Father and the Son”

On 30 June 1916 the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles set forth a detailed statement on the Father and the Son. In this exposition Christ, the literal son of God the Eternal Father, is represented as the Father in three ways:

He is the Father as Creator. Christ is referred to in many scriptural passages as “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth” (see Mosiah 15:4, 16:15, Alma 11:38–39, Ether 4:7).

He is the Father of all who accept his atoning sacrifice and covenant with him to obey his everlasting gospel. There are numerous scriptural passages that express this relationship (see Mosiah 5:7, 15:10–13, Ether 3:14, D&C 25:1, 34:1–3, 39:1–4).

He is the Father by divine investiture of authority. This means that the Savior is the fully authorized and commissioned representative of his Father, and as such can speak and act for the Father.

The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve explained divine investiture of authority as follows: “In all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. This is true of Christ in His preexistent, antemortal, or unembodied state, in the which He was known as Jehovah; also during His embodiment in the flesh; and during His labors as a disembodied spirit in the realm of the dead. . . . Thus the Father placed His name upon the Son; and Jesus Christ spoke and ministered in and through the Father’s name; and so far as power, authority, and Godship are concerned His words and acts were and are those of the Father” (in James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, p. 471; the entire statement, “The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve,” is found on pages 466–73 of *The Articles of Faith*).

Mosiah 15:5–19. The Seed of Christ

After explaining the relationship of the law of Moses to the coming Messiah, Abinadi interpreted the

words of Isaiah that the wicked priests quoted (see Mosiah 12:21–24). Abinadi said that Isaiah spoke of those who are the seed of Christ.

Mosiah 15:20–31. The First Resurrection

Abinadi taught that because Christ would break the bands of death, or have power over death, He would hold the keys for the resurrection of all people (see Mosiah 15:20). Abinadi taught that there would be a first resurrection at the time of Christ’s resurrection (see vv. 21–23).

Concerning this first resurrection, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “To those who lived before the resurrection of Christ, the day of his coming forth from the dead was known as the *first resurrection*. . . . To those who have lived since that day, the first resurrection is yet future and will take place at the time of the Second Coming” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 639). Elder McConkie also wrote that “the righteous dead who lived from the day of Adam to the time when Christ broke the bands of death ‘were with Christ in his resurrection.’ (D. & C. 133:54–55.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 639).

Abinadi taught that those who died without a knowledge of the gospel before Christ’s resurrection could also “have a part in the first resurrection, or have eternal life” (Mosiah 15:24). These people would have the gospel preached to them in the spirit world and would be able to receive all of the blessings given to those resurrected at the time of the first resurrection, even though they would not be resurrected until a later time (see D&C 137:7).

Those who willfully rebel against Christ have no part in the first resurrection. Abinadi explained that willful rebellion refers to those who have known the gospel but have forsaken it (see Mosiah 15:26–27).

Mosiah 15:25. Eternal Life for Little Children

Compare what Abinadi said about little children having eternal life (see Mosiah 15:25) with Moroni 8 and Doctrine and Covenants 137:10.

“Among all the glorious gospel verities given of God to his people there is scarcely a doctrine so sweet, so soul satisfying, and so soul sanctifying, as the one which proclaims—

“Little children shall be saved. They are alive in Christ and shall have eternal life. For them the family unit will continue, and the fulness of exaltation is theirs. No blessing shall be withheld. They shall rise in immortal glory, grow to full maturity, and live forever

in the highest heaven of the celestial kingdom—all through the merits and mercy and grace of the Holy Messiah, all because of the atoning sacrifice of Him who died that we might live” (Bruce R. McConkie, “The Salvation of Little Children,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1977, p. 3).

Mosiah 15:28–31. A Strong Declaration

In Mosiah 15:28–31 Abinadi testified that Isaiah’s prophecy quoted by the wicked priests (see Mosiah 12:21–24) would come to pass. Abinadi testified that the word of the Lord would be declared to all the earth, and that Zion would be established.

Mosiah 16:13–15. “Tremble and Repent”

Mosiah 16:13–15 contains Abinadi’s concluding message to the wicked priests. Note how Abinadi centered his testimony on the Atonement, and how he indicated that salvation is merited only through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Even the priests’ claim that they were obedient to the law of Moses was a rationalization of their own wickedness; if they had truly kept the Mosaic law, it would have taught them of and brought them to Christ.

Mosiah 17:1–4. “A Man Named Alma”

“One of the wicked priests of King Noah is a man named Alma, who is a descendant of Nephi. When first introduced in the Book of Mormon, Alma is a young man in the process of being converted by Abinadi. (Mosiah 17:2.) Much of the religious history of the Nephite nation for the next three hundred years is concerned with this man and his descendants. Alma not only begins a religious revival among his own people, but later he is given power by King Mosiah to establish churches throughout all the land of Zarahemla. (See Mosiah 25:19.)

“Still later we read that Alma’s son (also called Alma) succeeds his father as the religious leader of the people and also becomes the first chief judge over the Nephite nation. Other descendants of Alma the elder who become great religious leaders of the Nephites include his grandson (Helaman); great-grandson (Helaman, the son of Helaman); great-great-grandson (Nephi, the son of Helaman who is the son of Helaman); and great-great-great-grandson (Nephi the second, who is also the chief disciple of the resurrected Jesus Christ). Abinadi may have felt that he had failed as a missionary; so far as the record indicates, his only convert was Alma. However, as mentioned above, the missionary efforts of Abinadi affected the religious life of the Nephites for hundreds

of years” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 187).

Mosiah 17:5–12. The Methods of the Guilty

King Noah indicated that he was condemning Abinadi because Abinadi said that “God himself should come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 17:8). The real reason is shown in King Noah’s statement that he would spare Abinadi if he would recall all the words he had spoken against the king and his people (see v. 8).

One of the methods of the guilty is to destroy those who have exposed their guilt. Abinadi’s words condemned Noah and his people for their sinful ways, so Noah sought the life of Abinadi. Truly, as Nephi said, “The guilty taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center” (1 Nephi 16:2).

Mosiah 17:13–20. Abinadi’s Martyrdom

“In the gospel sense, *martyrdom* is the voluntary acceptance of death at the hands of wicked men rather than to forsake Christ and his holy gospel. It is the supreme earthly sacrifice in which a man certifies to his absolute faith and to the desires for righteousness and for eternal life which are in his heart” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 469).

Points to Ponder

- How would Abinadi measure up if a missionary’s success was determined by the number of baptisms he performed? Why was Abinadi a successful missionary?
- Who are the seed of Christ? (see Mosiah 15:10–13).
- Who did Abinadi say would come forth in the first resurrection? (see vv. 21–26).

Chapter 21

Mosiah 18–24

Introduction

The Lord is bound when we do what he says, but when we do not do what he says, we have no promise (see D&C 82:10). The Nephites in the land of Lehi-Nephi found themselves in bondage to the Lamanites because of their failure to keep the commandments of God. Eventually, “they did humble themselves even in the depths of humility; and they did cry mightily to God; yea, even all the day long did they cry unto their God that he would deliver them out of their afflictions” (Mosiah 21:14).

God did not deliver the Nephites immediately after they humbled themselves. They continued to languish under the abusive treatment of the Lamanites for a while longer. Their joyful release came, however, when the Lord felt it was time to recognize their humble petitions and deliver them out of bondage.

Notes and Commentary

Mosiah 18:1–11. The Covenants of Baptism

Baptism symbolizes the death of the old, sinful person and the rebirth of the new, spiritual person through faith in Christ and sincere repentance. The baptismal font is symbolic of the grave, where we are “buried with [Christ] by baptism into death” (Romans 6:4; see also D&C 128:12–13).

At baptism we covenant to take upon us the name of Christ (see D&C 20:37) and thus become his sons and daughters. In Mosiah 18:8–10 Alma explained what the baptismal covenant means in practical, everyday terms. If we truly take upon us the name of Christ, we are willing to—

1. “Come into the fold of God” (v. 8).
2. Be called the people of God (see v. 8).
3. “Bear one another’s burdens” (v. 8).
4. “Mourn with those that mourn” (v. 9).
5. Comfort those who need comforting (see v. 9).
6. Stand as a witness of God at all times, in all things, and in all places (see v. 9).

7. Be baptized in the name of the Lord as a witness that we have entered into a covenant with him (see v. 10).
8. Serve the Lord and keep his commandments (see v. 10).

As we faithfully strive to live these covenants and obligations, the Lord in return promises that we will—

1. “Be redeemed of God” (v. 9).
2. “Be numbered with those of the first resurrection” (v. 9).
3. Have eternal life (see v. 9).
4. Have his Spirit more abundantly upon us (see v. 10).

Mosiah 18:12–15. Alma’s Authority to Baptize

“We may conclude that Alma held the priesthood before he, with others, became disturbed with King Noah. Whether this is so or not makes no difference because in the Book of Mosiah it is stated definitely that he had authority.

““And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said: Helam, I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world” [Mosiah 18:13].

“If he had authority to baptize that is evidence that he had been baptized. Therefore, when Alma baptized himself with Helam that was not a case of Alma baptizing himself, but merely as a token to the Lord of his humility and full repentance” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 3:203).

Mosiah 18:16–35. Organizing the Church

Alma baptized 204 individuals in the waters of Mormon, “and they were called the church of God, or the church of Christ, from that time forward” (Mosiah 18:17). Alma ordained a priest for every fifty members and commanded these priests to teach the people “concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (v. 17). The priests were to teach only what the

prophets had taught (see v. 19); they were to teach faith, repentance, baptism, love, and unity (see vv. 20–21), and they were to keep the Sabbath day a holy day of worship (see v. 23).

The priests were to “labor with their own hands for their support” (v. 24) and were not to be paid for their work in the Church, but “for their labor they were to receive the grace of God” (v. 26). If there were members who wished to give “to those priests that stood in need” (v. 28), such generosity was encouraged.

Alma had to teach these principles because the people under King Noah were in a state of apostasy. Those principles had always been taught in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Alma taught his people some of the basic principles of the law of consecration (see vv. 27–28). While there is no evidence that the law of consecration was formally established among them, it is evident that this small group of converts had the spirit of Zion in their hearts.

Mosiah 18:28. The Spirit of Giving

“Some may ask, ‘How do I obtain these righteous feelings in giving? How do I overcome giving grudgingly? How do I obtain the “*pure love of Christ*?”’ To those I would say: Faithfully live all the commandments, give of yourselves, care for your families, serve in church callings, perform missionary work, pay tithes and offerings, study the scriptures—and the list could go on. As you lose yourself in this service, the Lord will touch and soften your heart” (Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, pp. 131–32; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, p. 93).

Mosiah 19–23. Return to Zarahemla

Chapters 19–22 of Mosiah are taken from the record of the Zeniff colony. These chapters contain a detailed account of the events that led to the state of bondage in which Ammon found Limhi’s people and also to their eventual deliverance. Note what finally leads to their deliverance. Contrast this event with the end of King Noah and his priests in fulfillment of Abinadi’s prophecies.

Mosiah 21:23 brings the reader back to the sequence of events in Mosiah 7–8. The scriptures from Mosiah 9 to Mosiah 21:23 are a flashback taken from the record of the Zeniff colony.

Mosiah 23:21. Patience

Elder Neal A. Maxwell gave the following insight about patience:

“The necessity of our having this intriguing attribute is cited several times in the scriptures, including by King Benjamin, who clustered the attributes of a saint, and patience was a charter member of that cluster (see Mosiah 3:19; see also Al. 7:23).

“Patience is not indifference. Actually, it is caring very much, but being willing, nevertheless, to submit both to the Lord and to what the scriptures call the ‘process of time.’

“Patience is tied very closely to faith in our Heavenly Father. Actually, when we are unduly impatient, we are suggesting that we know what is best—better than does God. Or, at least, we are asserting that our timetable is better than his. Either way we are questioning the reality of God’s omniscience, as if, as some seem to believe, God were on some sort of postdoctoral fellowship. . . .

“We read in Mosiah about how the Lord simultaneously tries the *patience* of his people even as he tries their faith (see Mosiah 23:21). One is not only to endure—but to endure well and gracefully those things which the Lord ‘seeth fit to inflict upon [us]’ (Mosiah 3:19), just as did a group of ancient American Saints who were bearing unusual burdens but who submitted ‘cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord’ (Mosiah 24:15). . . .

“The Lord has twice said: ‘And seek the face of the Lord always, that *in patience ye may possess your souls*, and ye shall have eternal life’ (D&C 101:38, italics added; see also Luke 21:19). Could it be that only when our self-control has become total do we come into true possession of our own souls?” (“Patience,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1980, p. 28).

Mosiah 24. The Deliverance of Alma’s People

Mosiah 24 contains the account of the deliverance of Alma’s people from Amulon and his evil companions. Mormon’s insights and commentary on the significance of this event help us understand the lesson we can learn from it. Note especially verses 10, 12, and 16, and compare them with Mormon’s comments in Mosiah 23:21–22.

Points to Ponder

- The following exercise is designed to let you see in an actual historical setting the workings of the principles you have just studied. Note that the people of King Limhi were still out of tune with the Lord when they were forced to turn to him; therefore, “the Lord was slow to hear their cry because of their iniquities” (Mosiah 21:15). The people of Alma, however, had attuned their lives long before their need arose, and so the Lord could help them directly.

Two Escapes

	Limhi’s People	Alma’s People
In bondage to:	(Mosiah 19:25–28) _____ _____	(Mosiah 23:36–39) _____ _____
The plan: Natural or miraculous?	(Mosiah 22:1–8) _____ _____	(Mosiah 24:16–17) _____ _____
The escape: Natural or miraculous?	(Mosiah 22:9–13) _____ _____	(Mosiah 24:18–25) _____ _____

- What do you think made the difference in the way the Lord answered the prayers of each group?

Limhi’s People

Review Mosiah 7:25–28, 20:20–21, 21:1–16.

Alma’s People

Review Mosiah 18:8–11, 23:21–23, 24:12–16.

Chapter 22

Mosiah 25–29

Introduction

One of the greatest miracles happens when a person changes from a life of sin to a life of righteousness. Alma the Younger is an excellent example of this. As you study his experience, you will learn what it means to be born again.

Alma the Younger also received the records from King Mosiah, was appointed the first chief judge over the Nephites, and became the high priest in charge of the Church.

Notes and Commentary

Mosiah 25:1–4. Fewer Nephites Than Mulekites

Mosiah’s grandfather, Mosiah I, led a group of righteous Nephites out of the land of Lehi-Nephi during a time when the main body of the Nephites were wicked and either being absorbed or destroyed by the Lamanites. These righteous Nephites traveled north and discovered the people of Zarahemla (see Omni 1:12–15). Nothing more is heard of the Nephites left behind in the land of Lehi-Nephi. Apparently they either joined with or were destroyed by the Lamanites.

Years later many more Nephites were killed during the recolonizing of the land of Lehi-Nephi under Zeniff, Noah, and Limhi.

Mosiah 25:5–11. “Struck with Wonder and Amazement”

The value of keeping records is shown over and over again in the Book of Mormon. Records, as Alma said to Helaman, “have enlarged the memory of this people . . . and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls” (Alma 37:8).

Mosiah 25:12–13. Rulers and Teachers

The Lord promised Nephi, “and inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren” (1 Nephi 2:22). This promise seems to have extended over many generations.

Mosiah 26:1–33. Sin and Crime

There is a distinction between what is a sin and what is a crime. A sin is a violation of a law of God,

while a crime is a violation of a public law. An act can be both, but many times it is not.

Alma sought King Mosiah’s help in dealing with sinful beliefs and practices being spread among the people. Mosiah, however, could not involve the government in Church matters. Even though the beliefs of some people were evil, Nephite law allowed them to believe as they chose (see Alma 30:7–11). In this sense, the people had committed no crime.

As the head of the Church it was Alma’s responsibility to judge such people, so he turned to the Lord for instructions. Mosiah 26:15–32 contains the revelation of the Lord to Alma. The Lord explained the need to forgive the repentant and to excommunicate the rebellious in maintaining the good name of the Church. This stance was reaffirmed in our dispensation when the Lord revealed that the Church could not punish a member beyond excommunication for any sin or crime committed (see D&C 134:10).

Mosiah 26:24–28. Having the Lord Know Us

The Lord is fully acquainted with every person. The kind of knowing referred to in Mosiah 26:24–27 involves obeying the Lord’s commandments and becoming like him (see 1 John 2:3–6). Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

“To know God in that full sense which will enable us to gain eternal salvation means that we must know what he knows, enjoy what he enjoys, experience what he experiences. In New Testament language, we must ‘be like him.’ (1 John 3:2.)

“But before we can become like him, we must obey those laws that will enable us to acquire the character, perfections, and attributes that he possesses.

“And before we can obey these laws, we must learn what they are; we must learn of Christ and his gospel. We must learn ‘that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.’ (Mosiah 3:18.) We must learn that baptism under the hands of a legal administrator is essential to salvation and that after baptism we must keep the commandments and ‘press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.’ (D&C 93:36.)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1966, p. 79).

Having become like Christ we can know Christ, and the Savior then knows us. “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13).

Mosiah 26:29. Confessing Sins

A confession of sins is required as part of the repentance process. The Lord said, “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43).

All sins are to be confessed to God. Confession to proper priesthood leaders is also necessary for those sins that jeopardize one’s standing or membership in the Church, so that proper Church action can be determined to help the sinner receive forgiveness. Only God can grant forgiveness of sins, but priesthood leaders can rightly determine what action needs to be taken to help the sinner, to preserve the good name of the Church of Jesus Christ, and to see that justice is done.

Mosiah 26:31–39. Forgiveness of Sin

“Although there are many ecclesiastical officers in the Church whose positions entitle and require them to be judges, the authority of those positions does not necessarily qualify them to forgive or remit sins. . . .

“The bishop, and others in comparable positions, can forgive in the sense of waiving the penalties. In our loose connotation we sometimes call this forgiveness, but it is not forgiveness in the sense of ‘wiping out’ or absolution. The waiver means, however, that the individual will not need to be tried again for the same error, and that he may become active and have fellowship with the people of the Church. In receiving the confession and waiving the penalties the bishop is representing the Lord. He helps to carry the burden, relieves the transgressor’s strain and tension, and assures to him a continuation of Church activity.

“It is the Lord, however, who forgives sin” (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 332).

Mosiah 26:36. Excommunication

“There are cultists who claim that the Church might sever a person from the Church but could not affect his eternal status or take from him the Holy Ghost or his priesthood or temple blessings. This is but wishful thinking, for the Lord has pledged to acknowledge the acts of his servants, and his Church is

his kingdom. And when the person is excommunicated by the bishopric, the high council, or the higher councils, it is as though the Lord had personally with his own voice pronounced the penalty.

“That this kind of authority, reaching in its effects from this life into the future phases of eternity, was to be a feature of the Church of Jesus Christ is clearly shown by the Savior’s words:

““And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

““And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ (Matt. 16:18–19.)” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 331).

Mosiah 27:1–33. The Ministering of Angels

Speaking about a man who said he had prayed for the visitation of angels, President Wilford Woodruff said:

“I said to him that if he were to pray a thousand years to the God of Israel for that gift, it would not be granted, unless the Lord had a motive in sending an angel to him. I told him that the Lord never did nor never will send an angel to anybody merely to gratify the desire of the individual to see an angel. If the Lord sends an angel to anyone, He sends him to perform a work that cannot be performed only by the administration of an angel. I said to him that those were my views. The Lord had sent angels to men from the creation of the world, at different times, but always with a message or with something to perform that could not be performed without. I rehearsed to him different times when angels appeared to men. Of course, I referred to the angel visiting Joseph Smith. The Revelator John said that in the last days an angel would fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwelt on the earth. The reason it required an angel to do this work was, the Gospel was not on the earth. The Gospel and the Priesthood had been taken from among men. Hence God had to restore it again.

“Now, I have always said, and I want to say it to you, that the Holy Ghost is what every Saint of God needs. It is far more important that a man should have that gift than he should have the ministrations of an angel, unless it is necessary for an angel to teach him something that he has not been taught” (“Discourse

Delivered at the Weber Stake Conference,” *Deseret Weekly*, 7 Nov. 1896, p. 1).

Mosiah 27:25. “Born Again”

“We are talking about being born again. This matter of being born and having a family relationship is purely a matter of definition. We were born first as the spirit children of God, our Heavenly Father. We lived with him for an infinite period. Our lives did not commence when we started out this mortal existence. This mortal sphere is simply a change of status for the eternal spirit that had lived for an infinite period in the presence of God, our Heavenly Father. Birth is a change of status. It is a new way of living.

“We are living here in mortality, and if we come to Christ and start living his laws and change our way of existence, we are born again. Paul expresses it by saying that we crucify the old man of sin. (See Romans 6:6 and Ephesians 4:22.) We die as pertaining to the things of this world and we become alive in Christ. We become members of his family.

“When Alma the younger had his glorious experience and was born again—without any question he had been baptized in his youth but he had not been born again, he had not exercised the power to become a son of God—when this finally came, he received from the Lord the pronouncement that all mankind, men and women, people of every nation and kindred and tongue, had to be born again if they were to become inheritors of peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. And then he was counseled that they had to become new creatures. They had to become a new creation by the power of the Holy Spirit; their lives had to be changed. (See Mosiah 27:24–31 and Alma 5.) And that change is one in which people become alive to the things of righteousness; they die as pertaining to carnality and things that are vulgar, as to things that lead contrary to, and away from, the Lord, our Heavenly Father” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Households of Faith*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 1 Dec. 1970], p. 4).

Mosiah 27:29. “The Marvelous Light of God”

“As far as we degenerate from God, we descend to the devil and lose knowledge, and without knowledge we cannot be saved, and while our hearts are filled with evil, and we are studying evil, there is no room in our hearts for good, or studying good. Is not God good? Then you be good; if He is faithful, then you be

faithful. Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, and seek for every good thing.

“The Church must be cleansed, and I proclaim against all iniquity. A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 217).

Mosiah 28:11–20. The “Interpreters”

“The people of Limhi brought to Mosiah a record, ‘. . . engraven on plates of ore,’ which record Mosiah translated by the aid of ‘two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow,’ and which gave an account of the Jaredites. In translating this record Mosiah kept from going forth to the people that particular part forbidden of the Lord to be revealed until after he was lifted up upon the cross. These sacred revelations given to the brother of Jared were kept from the Nephite people, as well as many other things, until after the resurrection of Christ [see Alma 63:12]. After the appearing of the Savior to the Nephites, the vision of the brother of Jared was revealed to the Nephites. When Moroni made his abridgment of the record of Ether, he copied on his record the vision of the brother of Jared. At the command of the Lord, however, Moroni also sealed up the greater things in this vision and the ‘interpreters’—which were the same ‘two stones’ had by the brother of Jared, so that this vision should not be made known even in our day among the Gentiles, in the day of their wickedness [see 2 Nephi 27:8]; ‘. . . until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord.’ So we today do not have the fulness of the account written and sealed up by the brother of Jared and again sealed by Moroni. This part of the record the Prophet Joseph Smith was forbidden to translate. We have, then, received but the ‘lesser part.’

“Joseph Smith received with the ‘breastplate’ and the plates of the Book of Mormon, the Urim and Thummim, which were hid up by Moroni to come forth in the last days as a means by which the ancient record might be translated, which Urim and Thummim were given to the brother of Jared” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:161–62).

Mosiah 29:25–26. The Voice of the People

“I have a complete confidence in the aggregate wisdom of the . . . people *if they are given and made to understand the facts*. The wisdom of the mass is always greater than the wisdom of the individual or of the group. The few may be more subtle, more agile-minded, more resourceful; they may for a time push to the front and scamper ahead in the march; they may on occasion and for a time entice us down the wrong highway at the crossroads. But the great slow-moving, deliberate-thinking mass plods along over the years down the Divinely appointed way. Led astray, they slowly, cumberously swing back to the right road, no matter what the toil or the sacrifice may be, and when they start the return, they crush whatever lies in their path. So has humanity come up through the ages” (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in Jerreld L. Newquist, comp., *Prophets, Principles, and National Survival*, p. 110).

Mosiah 29:32–39. Free Agency and Responsibility

“*With free agency there comes responsibility*. If man is to be rewarded for righteousness and punished for evil, then common justice demands that he be given the power of independent action. A knowledge of good and evil is essential to man’s progress on earth. *If he were coerced to do right at all times, or were helplessly enticed to commit sin, he would merit neither a blessing for the first nor a punishment for the second*. Man’s responsibility is correspondingly operative with his free agency. Actions in harmony with divine law and the laws of nature will bring happiness, and those in opposition to divine truth, misery. Man is responsible not only for every deed, but also for every idle word and thought” (David O. McKay, “Free Agency . . . the Gift Divine,” *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1962, p. 86; emphasis added).

Mosiah 29:41–47. The Reign of the Judges

The change in government instituted through King Mosiah was viewed as so significant that from that point on the Nephites recorded their time from the beginning of the reign of the judges. Until this point, the Nephites had kept track of time from the year Lehi left Jerusalem.

Points to Ponder

- What are some events that could trigger the beginning of a spiritual rebirth in a person? (see Mosiah 4:1–2, Alma 32:6–13, Helaman 5:43–52).
- Why did the Lord send an angel to appear to Alma and the sons of Mosiah? (see Mosiah 27:14).
- Why were judges chosen to rule over the people in place of a king near the end of King Mosiah’s reign? (see Mosiah 29).

Chapter 23

Alma 1–4

Introduction

In the first eight years of the new Nephite democratic government, two events tested the rule of the judges. The first event was the attempt of a clever criminal, Nehor, to use his freedom as a cloak to disguise his crimes. The second event was Amlici's attempt to revolt and establish a kingship again. Alma, as chief judge and high priest, led the righteous to overcome these disruptions.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 1:1–6. Teachers of Faith and Righteousness

Alma the Elder taught his people to “trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments” (Mosiah 23:14). How did Nehor violate these requirements?

President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“Because a man has great schooling, is educated according to the ideas of the world, is not sufficient reason why he should be called to take charge of a class in any of the organizations or priesthood quorums within the Church. Now, if he has scholastic ability and training, and along with it has faith in the principles of the gospel and in the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Prophet Joseph Smith, all well and good. But if he is filled with all kinds of philosophy and notions and cannot accept the doctrines in the standard works of the Church, we do not want him, whether it is in our auxiliaries or the priesthood, or in our seminaries or institutes, that are given for the teaching of religious principles and to instil faith in the hearts of our young people. . . .

“It makes no difference who the teacher is, if he teaches false doctrine, if he teaches that which has been condemned by the Lord, that is contrary to what is written in the revelations given to the Church, then he should not teach” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1954, pp. 21–22).

Alma 1:8–9. Gideon

Gideon was a Nephite patriot who gained prominence in the Book of Mormon during the reigns of King Noah and King Limhi (see Mosiah 19:4–8,

18–24; 20:15–22). It was Gideon who proposed the way for King Limhi's people to successfully escape from Lamanite bondage (see Mosiah 22:3–9). The Nephites apparently thought so highly of Gideon that they named both a valley and a city after him (see Alma 2:20, 6:7).

Alma 1:17–18. Capital Punishment

The law of God is, “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Genesis 9:6). In 1889 the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles prepared a declaration regarding the Church's position on capital punishment:

“We solemnly make the following declarations, viz.:

“That this Church views the shedding of human blood with the utmost abhorrence. That *we regard the killing of human beings, except in conformity with the civil law, as a capital crime which should be punished by shedding the blood of the criminal, after a public trial before a legally constituted court of the land. . . .*

“The revelations of God to this Church make death the penalty for capital crime, and require that offenders against life and property shall be delivered up to and tried by the laws of the land” (“Official Declaration,” *Millennial Star*, 20 Jan. 1890, pp. 33–34; emphasis added).

Alma 1:19–33. Persecution

What are the general causes of persecution? How are the faithful able to stand firm and steadfast in the face of bitter persecution?

Notice in Alma 1:20–21 that members of the Church were charged with a higher law forbidding persecution. Unfortunately, some of the Saints forgot this obligation and caused “much affliction to the church” (v. 23). In spite of this problem, the example set by the faithful members is one that modern Saints should seek to emulate (see vv. 25–31).

Alma 2. Amlici's Rebellion

Amlici's attempt to reinstate a monarchical government and become king was a second test and the first major challenge for the new system of judges. How was this test different from the one posed by Nehor in the first chapter of Alma?

The story of Amlici is another example of how wicked men sometimes seek governmental power in order to enforce their will on others. It also teaches that there are times when righteous people must take up arms to defend their laws and liberty. The Nephites were wise enough to rely on the strength of the Lord to help them maintain the voice of the people, the only sure way of combating attempts against it (see Alma 2:18, 28, 30–31).

Alma 3:1–3. One Wicked Man

The number of people slain in the war against the Amlicites was not recorded “because of the greatness of their number” (Alma 3:1), but in one battle over nineteen thousand Nephites and Amlicites were slain (see Alma 2:19). Mormon summarized that “in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world” (Alma 3:26). All of this happened because one man wanted to exercise unrighteous dominion. Mormon’s comment in Alma 46:9 also seems applicable in this incident.

Alma 3:20–27. “The Wages of Sin”

Mormon wrote that “every man receiveth wages of him whom he listeth to obey” (Alma 3:27). When men choose to follow Satan, as the Amlicites did, they soon find themselves caught “in their own snare” (D&C 10:26). They learn that “the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell” (Alma 30:60). As Jesus said, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34), and as Paul wrote, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Sin brings its own punishment.

Alma 4:11–20. The Power of the Word of God

In this period of Book of Mormon history there were men who had great political power, but used it righteously and did not seek for more power. Seeing the unrighteous actions of the people, Alma relinquished his position as chief judge, the political head of state, in order to “go forth among his people . . . that he might preach the word of God unto them” (Alma 4:19). What two things did Alma feel the word of God would do? (see v. 19).

Points to Ponder

- What is the difference between “an ignominious death” such as Nehor suffered (see Alma 1:15) and an honorable death? (see D&C 42:45–46).
- How do the words *preach*, *teach*, and *learn* relate to each other in the gospel context? (see Alma 1:26, Romans 10:13–17).
- Read Alma 3:4, 13. Do you think we can mark ourselves for good or evil in regard to such things as dress, language, diet, and entertainment?
- What is priestcraft? (see 2 Nephi 26:29, Alma 1:16). What righteous reason should a person have to preach?

Chapter 24

Alma 5–7

Introduction

Alma experienced what it means to be “born of God” (Alma 5:14), and he explained how Christ can help us in our quest to reach new spiritual heights. These teachings of an inspired prophet of God can and should have an everlasting effect upon us.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 5. To the People of Zarahemla

Alma 5 is the message of Alma, the high priest of the Church, to a congregation of both members and nonmembers in Zarahemla (see v. 62). His purpose was to bring the people back to Christ. The questions Alma asked the members of the Church provide an excellent self-evaluation interview (see vv. 14–31). We should seriously ask ourselves each of these questions and see if we meet the spiritual requirements of those who would be called Saints.

Alma 5:12–13. “A Mighty Change”

Alma refers to “a mighty change” (Alma 5:13) being wrought in the hearts of the people. The heart has often been used to symbolize the center of our desires and affections. The man of the world is likely to have these desires and affections centered in the appetites of the flesh and the pleasures of the world. The man of Christ turns his back on the things of the world and seeks the things of God. Everyone, at some time, needs to make a commitment and experience a change of heart. Elder Marion G. Romney defined this change of heart as conversion:

“Webster says the verb, ‘convert,’ means ‘to turn from one belief or course to another.’ That ‘conversion’ is ‘a spiritual and moral *change* attending a *change* of belief with conviction.’ As used in the scriptures, ‘converted’ generally implies not merely mental acceptance of Jesus and his teachings but also a motivating faith in him and in his gospel—a faith which works a transformation, an actual *change* in one’s understanding of life’s meaning and in his allegiance to God—in interest, in thought, and in conduct. While conversion may be accomplished in stages, one is not really converted in the full sense of the term unless and until he is at heart a new person.

‘Born again’ is the scriptural term” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, p. 23).

Alma 5:21. “Garments . . . Cleansed from All Stain”

“*Garments* are various articles of clothing used to dress the body. They may be worn for utilitarian or religious purposes or both. The Lord made ‘coats of skins’ for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness. (Gen. 3:21.) Special ceremonial and ‘holy garments’ were worn by Aaron and the priests. (Ex. 28; Lev. 16; Ezek. 42:14.) Garments worn by angels are ‘pure and white above all other whiteness.’ (D. & C. 20:6.) . . .

“Much that is sacred and symbolical is taught by reference to garments. . . .

“Clean garments are a sign of cleanliness, perfection, and salvation. To gain salvation men must wash their garments in the blood of the Lamb. (1 Ne. 12:10; Alma 5:21–27; 7:25; 13:11–12; 3 Ne. 27:19; Rev. 6:11; 7:9–17.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 303–4).

Alma 5:37–40. “Sin . . . Is Service to Satan”

“Sin . . . is service to Satan. It is a truism that men are ‘his whom they list to obey.’ Many scriptures affirm this statement. Jesus pointed to this truth when he said to the Jews, ‘Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.’ (John 8:34.) Paul, writing to the Romans, said:

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you. . . .

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:13, 15–16.)

“Peter too emphasizes this bondage:

“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.’ (2 Pet. 2:18–19.)” (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 20).

Alma 5:53. Ignoring the Lord’s Counsel

Earlier in the Book of Mormon Nephi explained what it meant to “trample the Holy One under your feet” (Alma 5:53; see also 1 Nephi 19:7).

Alma 5:57–58. Names “Blotted Out”

Having one’s name “blotted out” (Alma 5:57) means excommunication from the Church and elimination from the book of life (see D&C 132:19). The priesthood power to bind a person in a saving covenant is also the power to loose him from that covenant (see Matthew 16:19).

Alma 6. Regulating the Church

God’s house is one of order, and this order must be maintained. Because natural deterioration is the way of things in a fallen world, prophets, like Alma, must regulate the Church by revelation.

Alma 6:6 encourages the exercise of faith and spiritual power in behalf of others. The world seeks to change men through outward means such as legislation, social programs, and coercion. The Lord’s way centers on an inner change.

Alma 7. To the People of Gideon

Note the contrast between Alma’s discourse to the people of Zarahemla (see Alma 5) and his discourse to the people of Gideon (see Alma 7). Alma gave a powerful message of warning and repentance to the people of Zarahemla because of their sins. On the other hand, he commended the people of Gideon for their righteousness and spoke of the glorious coming of Christ.

God’s prophets love to speak of the glories and joys of the gospel; however, they love people too much not to raise a warning voice against sin. Even though Alma’s message to the people of Gideon was more positive in tone than that to the people of Zarahemla, he still taught them the importance of being spiritually reborn (see vv. 14–16).

Alma 7:10. “By the Power of the Holy Ghost”

President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “I believe firmly that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh. He taught this doctrine to his disciples. He did not teach them that he was the Son of

the Holy Ghost, but the Son of the Father. Truly, all things are done by the power of the Holy Ghost. It was through this power that Jesus was brought into this world, but not as the Son of the Holy Ghost, but the Son of God. Jesus is greater than the Holy Spirit, which is subject unto him, but his Father is greater than he! He has said it. Christ was begotten of God. He was not born without the aid of Man, and that Man was God!” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:18).

Alma 7:10. “Born . . . at Jerusalem”

Anti-Mormon literature has repeatedly used Alma 7:10 to try to show that the Book of Mormon was written by Joseph Smith, and that he was so ignorant he did not even know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, not Jerusalem. Commenting on verse 10, President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“There is no conflict or contradiction in the Book of Mormon with any truth recorded in the Bible. A careful reading of what Alma said will show that he had no intention of declaring that Jesus would be born *in* Jerusalem. Alma knew better. So did Joseph Smith and those who were associated with him in the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon. Had Alma said, ‘born *in* Jerusalem, the *city* of our fathers,’ it would have made all the difference in the world. Then we would have said he made an error. Alma made no mistake, and what he said is true.

“Dr. Hugh Nibley, in his course of study for the priesthood for 1957, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, in Lesson 8, page 85, has this to say on this point:

“ . . . One of the favorite points of attack on the Book of Mormon has been the statement in Alma 7:10 that the Savior would be born “at Jerusalem which is the *land* of our forefathers.” Here Jerusalem is not the city “*in* the land of our forefathers,” *it is* the land. Christ was born in a village some six miles from the city of Jerusalem; it was not in the city, but it was in what we now know the ancients themselves designated as “the land of Jerusalem.” Such a neat test of authenticity is not often found in ancient documents.’ . . .

“ . . . [Alma] did not say that the Lord would be born *in* Jerusalem. The preposition ‘at’ has several meanings. The *Standard Dictionary* lists the following:

“Of a point in space; on; upon; close to; by; near; within. . . . When we think merely of the local or

geographical point, we use at; when we think of inclusive space, we employ in.’

“Alma was thinking of a geographical point, therefore he spoke properly according to the usage of language even in our own day when he said, ‘*at Jerusalem, the land of our forefathers,*’ Jerusalem being the central point of the land of their fathers” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:174–75).

Alma 7:23–24. Characteristics of True Saints

The admonition found in Alma 7:23–24 can be thought of as the requirements of a true follower of Christ. Imagine the benefits to society if all people accepted this admonition as their daily creed for living!

Points to Ponder

- What are some questions to consider in the process of being born of God? (see Alma 5:14–30, 53–55).
- Alma had the glorious experience of seeing an angel, but he still had to put forth much effort to strengthen his testimony (see Alma 5:45–48). Why?
- How is Jesus Christ able to understand our problems? (see Alma 7:11–12).
- Alma admonished the people to have faith, hope, and charity (see Alma 7:24). Why are these qualities important? (see Hebrews 11:6, Moroni 7:46–47, 10:22).

Chapter 25

Alma 8–12

Introduction

Even though he had been cast out of the wicked city of Ammonihah, Alma followed the angel's instructions to return. Amulek joined with Alma, and these two humble servants of the Lord confronted the disbelievers of Ammonihah.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 8. Ammonihah

Alma 8 begins an account of Alma's ministry in the city of Ammonihah, where full-scale apostasy and wickedness reigned. Despite the general wickedness of the people in Ammonihah, Alma found some success with the conversion of Amulek, Zeezrom, and others. The account of Alma's ministry in Ammonihah, found in Alma 8–16, illustrates the courage and greatness of the servants of God and the hardness that comes upon a people who willfully rebel against God.

Alma 9:14–34. Responsible for Knowledge

Brigham Young said: "Those who do not profess to know anything of the Lord are far better off than we are, unless we live our religion, for we who know our Master's will and do it not, will be beaten with many stripes; while they who do not know the Master's will and do it not will be beaten with few stripes. This is perfectly reasonable. We cannot chastise a child for doing that which is contrary to our wills, if he knows no better; but when our children are taught better and know what is required of them, if they then rebel, of course, they expect to be chastised, and it is perfectly right that they should be" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:111).

In Alma 9:20–22, Alma outlined the many ways the people of Nephi had been favored by the Lord:

1. They had received knowledge about the past, present, and future (see v. 20).
2. They had been visited by the Spirit of God (see v. 21).
3. They had conversed with angels, heard the voice of the Lord, and received the spirit of prophecy (see v. 21).

4. They had received many gifts of the Spirit (see v. 21).
5. They had been spared time after time by the Lord (see v. 22).
6. They had been blessed with material possessions (see v. 22).

Alma 10:2–3. "Lehi, . . . a Descendant of Manasseh"

"Some students of the Book of Mormon have wondered how descendants of Joseph were still living in Jerusalem in 600 B.C. when most members of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were taken into captivity by the Assyrians about 721 B.C. A scripture in 2 Chronicles may provide a clue to this problem. This account mentions that in about 941 B.C. Asa, the king of the land, gathered together at Jerusalem all of Judah and Benjamin 'and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh.' (2 Chronicles 15:9.) These 'strangers . . . out of Ephraim and Manasseh' who were gathered to Jerusalem in approximately 941 B.C. may have included the forefathers of Lehi and Ishmael" (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 199).

Alma 10:4–11. Amulek's Conversion

Amulek recounted to the people of Ammonihah the circumstances surrounding his conversion—he was a wealthy man, "of no small reputation" in the community (Alma 10:4). He knew the ways of the Lord but had hardened his heart against them until an angel appeared to him. The angel told Amulek that if he received the servant of the Lord he would be blessed.

God often blesses his children through his mortal servants. What great blessing did Alma bring to Amulek? (see v. 11; see also D&C 84:35–38, John 13:20).

Alma 10:12–32. The Prayers of the Righteous

Note in Alma 10:22–23 the effect that the prayers of the righteous had upon a nation. The prayers of the righteous also kept the Nephites from being destroyed later during the days of Captain Moroni and Samuel the Lamanite (see Alma 62:40, Helaman 13:12–14).

President Spencer W. Kimball said the following about our day: “There are many many upright and faithful who live all the commandments and whose lives and prayers keep the world from destruction” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 7; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 16).

Alma 11:1–19. Nephite Coins

The following chart shows the relative value of silver and gold coins under the system set up by Mosiah:

Silver Money	Gold Money Equivalent	Grain Equivalent
1. leah	(none listed)	1/8 measure
2. shiblum	(none listed)	1/4 measure
3. shiblon	(none listed)	1/2 measure
4. senum	senine	1 measure
5. (none listed)	antion	1 1/2 measures
6. amnor	seon	2 measures
7. ezrom	shum	4 measures
8. onti	limnah	7 measures

Alma 11:20–41. Amulek and Zeezrom

Zeezrom, skilled in the devices of Satan, sought to overthrow Amulek’s testimony. How did he first tempt Amulek? Mormon’s explanation of the Nephite money scale helps us understand how much Zeezrom offered Amulek. How many onties did Zeezrom offer Amulek?

Suppose you were answering Zeezrom’s questions. Without looking at Amulek’s response, how would you have answered the question in Alma 11:28? Many Church members would have said yes. Why did Amulek say no? In 3 Nephi 19:23 Christ spoke of the oneness of the Godhead. How does this help explain Amulek’s answer?

How would you have answered Zeezrom’s question in Alma 11:34? How does Amulek’s answer relate to 3 Nephi 9:21? What is the difference between the Lord saving us *in* our sins and saving us *from* our sins?

How would you have answered the question in Alma 11:38? Many people would have said no. Amulek said yes. How does his reply agree with Mosiah 3:8 and 3 Nephi 9:15?

Alma 11:42–44. “Restored to Its Proper Frame”

“There is no reason for any person to be concerned as to the appearance of individuals in the resurrection.

Death is a purifying process as far as the body is concerned. We have reason to believe that the appearance of old age will disappear and the body will be restored with the full vigor of manhood and womanhood. Children will arise as children, for there is no growth in the grave. Children will continue to grow until they reach the full stature of their spirits. Anything contrary to this would be inconsistent. When our bodies are restored, they will appear to be in the full vigor of manhood and womanhood, for the condition of physical weakness will all be left behind in the grave. . . .

“President Joseph F. Smith when speaking at the funeral of Sister Rachel Grant, the mother of President Heber J. Grant, had the following to say in relation to deformities in the resurrection:

““Deformity will be removed; defects will be eliminated, and men and women shall attain to the perfection of their spirits, to the perfection that God designed in the beginning. It is his purpose that men and women, his children, born to become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, shall be made perfect, physically as well as spiritually, through obedience to the law by which he has provided the means that perfection shall come to all his children. . . .”

“Salvation would be incomplete if individuals should arise in the resurrection with all the deformities, weaknesses, and imperfections that are found in so many of the human family in this mortal existence. We have every reason to believe that the spirits of mankind and all other creatures were in a perfect form in the spirit world. It would be an awful stretch of the imagination to think that the imperfections found so frequently in mortality were defects which were designed in the creation. Moreover, as the Lord made it clear in relation to the man who was born blind, it was not an immortal condition. . . .

“It is the will of the Lord that in the restoration of all things there shall come perfection. The physical defects, some of which may have resulted before birth, are defects which are due to some physical and mortal condition and not an inheritance from the spirit world” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:185–87, 189).

Alma 11:43. “A Bright Recollection of All Our Guilt”

“May I say to you that in reality a man cannot forget anything? He may have a lapse of memory; he

may not be able to recall at the moment a thing that he knows, or words that he has spoken; he may not have the power at his will to call up these events and words; but let God Almighty touch the mainspring of the memory, and awaken recollection, and you will find then that you have not even forgotten a single idle word that you have spoken! I believe the word of God to be true, and, therefore, I warn the youth of Zion, as well as those who are advanced in years, to beware of saying wicked things, of speaking evil, and taking in vain the name of sacred things and sacred beings. Guard your words, that you may not offend even man, much less offend God” (Joseph F. Smith, “A Sermon on Purity,” *Improvement Era*, May 1903, pp. 503–4; compare 2 Nephi 9:14, Alma 12:14).

Alma 11:45–46. The Spiritual Body

Speaking of those who use Paul’s reference to the “spiritual body” of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:44) as proof that there is no physical resurrection, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“These modern blind teachers of the blind have a very false understanding of what is meant by a spiritual body. They have based their conclusion on the statement that Paul makes that the body is raised a spiritual body, and that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. They cannot conceive in their minds a body raised from the dead, being composed of flesh and bones, quickened by spirit and not by blood. When Paul spoke of the *spiritual* body he had no reference at all to the *spirit* body and there they have made their mistake. They have confused the spiritual body, or, in other words, the body quickened by the spirit, with the body of the spirit alone. They think that those who believe in the resurrection of the literal body believe that it shall be raised again, quickened by blood, which is not the case. . . .

“After the resurrection from the dead our bodies will be spiritual bodies, but they will be bodies that are tangible, bodies that have been purified, but they will nevertheless be bodies of flesh and bones, but they will not be blood bodies, they will no longer be quickened by blood but quickened by the spirit which is eternal and they shall become immortal and shall never die” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1917, pp. 62–63).

Alma 12:7–11. “To Know the Mysteries of God”

“It is impossible for the carnally minded to understand the reason for the fall and likewise understand the necessity for the atonement of Jesus

Christ. It is true that not all the purposes of our Eternal Father have been revealed to man and there are some things that have to be received by faith; but these great truths have been made known and we have the assurance that through the sacrifice made on the cross all mankind and every other creature, even the earth itself, are redeemed from death and shall receive the resurrection and be restored to immortal life. Men receive assurance and knowledge due to their faithfulness and adherence to the commandments of Jesus Christ. Those who reject their Redeemer and refuse to keep his commandments cannot know and comprehend these eternal truths. Alma explained this to Zeezrom in the following words: [Alma 12:9–11.]

“Naturally the Lord cannot reveal the mysteries of his kingdom to the scoffer, neither can he to the member of the Church who is not faithful. If a man does not exercise faith why should he have the revelations concerning the kingdom of God revealed to him? They cannot understand them because they are ‘fallen’ man, and without the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, they are as the Lord expressed it, ‘carnal, sensual and devilish.’ [Mosiah 16:3.] It is written that when the disciples asked the Savior why he spoke in parables, he answered: ‘Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.’ [Matthew 13:11–12.] The Lord further said, ‘Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.’ [Matthew 7:6.] There were occasions when he instructed his disciples not to reveal certain manifestations until after his resurrection.

“Of course, a man who believes that man has descended from lower forms of life, and by gradual development after an enormous length of time evolved from fish to reptile and then to ape, can never understand the fall of man and the atonement. These truths are mysteries to him and only contempt and abuse do they receive from him” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny*, pp. 358–60).

Alma 12:15–18. The Second Death

“This second death is not . . . the dissolution or annihilation of both spirit and body, but banishment from the presence of God and from partaking of the things of righteousness” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:222).

“It is very clear in the Doctrine and Covenants 76:30–37, that the only persons who will be completely overcome by this dreadful fate [the second death] are the sons of perdition, who go with the devil and his angels into ‘outer darkness.’ All the rest of mankind, even the wicked, will receive some measure of salvation after they suffer the wrath of God. However, they will of necessity be brought to repentance and acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ as far as it will apply to them” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:76).

Alma 12:18. No Death after the Resurrection

“The tabernacles we were to receive [when coming into mortality] were to be *tabernacles of corruption*. Do not misunderstand me in the use of that word, for I mean bodies that are changeable, subject to change as we see change in mortality. Our bodies are constantly changing, throwing off the waste and taking on the new to replace the waste. And so in the scriptures they are spoken of as being corruptible bodies.

“Notwithstanding that, we rejoiced in the opportunity to receive bodies of that kind, for a season, with the understanding that eventually we would pass through death and then the resurrection, and then we would take up those bodies incorruptible. The spirit and the body in that resurrection would be again united, inseparably, never again to die, never again to receive corruption in the sense in which I am using that term, but to exist forever. [See 1 Corinthians 15:42–54, Alma 11:45, 12:18.] Is there any wonder that the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:67).

Alma 12:19–21. Cherubim

“Apparently a *cherub* is an angel of some particular order or rank to whom specific duties and work are assigned. That portion of the Lord’s word which is now available among men does not set forth clearly either the identity or work of these heavenly beings. The concept of sectarian scholars that they are ‘mythological living creatures,’ who filled for the Hebrew people the same position that the griffins did for the Hittites, is utterly false. (Griffins were supposed to be winged sphinxes having the bodies of lions and the heads and wings of eagles, and they were in fact mythological creatures.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 124).

Points to Ponder

- Elder Richard L. Evans said, “If we don’t change direction, we will arrive at where we’re going” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, p. 15). How might this apply to the people of Ammonihah?
- The people of Ammonihah were told to “bring forth works which are meet for repentance” (Alma 9:30). The word *meet*, now somewhat out of use, means fit, suitable, proper, or worthy. How could the people have complied with Alma’s counsel?
- Read Alma 10:6. What do you suppose Amulek meant when he said he was called many times but would not hear? Could this statement sometimes apply to both members of the Church and nonmembers now?

Chapter 26

Alma 13–16

Introduction

In Alma 13–16 you will read about the foreordination of those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, about the continued teachings and works of Alma and Amulek in Ammonihah, and about the judgments of God upon a wicked people who once had the light.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 13:1–2. The Holy Order of God

Read Doctrine and Covenants 107:1–4. The priests referred to in Alma 13:1–2 were holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In a general sense anyone who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood can be called a priest (see D&C 76:56–57). For additional information on the priesthood held by Lehi’s descendants see the student manual commentary on 2 Nephi 5:26.

Alma 13:3. “Called and Prepared”

“The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that ‘Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the grand council of heaven before this world was.’ [*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 365.] So likewise declared the Apostle Paul, ‘For whom he did foreknow . . . them he also called.’ (Romans 2:29–30.) But do not misunderstand that such a calling and such foreordination pre-determine what you must do. A prophet on this western continent has spoken plainly on this subject, ‘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; in the first place being left to choose good or evil.’ (Alma 13:3.) This last passage makes the others preceding more understandable. God may have called and chosen men in the spirit world or in their first estate to do a certain work, but whether they will accept that calling here and magnify it by faithful service and good works while in mortality is a matter in which it is their right and privilege to exercise their free agency to choose good or evil.

“. . . I fear there are many among us who because of their faithfulness in the spirit world were ‘called’ to do a great work here, but like reckless spendthrifts they are exercising their free agency in riotous living

and are losing their birthright and the blessings that were theirs had they proved faithful to their calling. Hence as the Lord has said, ‘there are many called but few are chosen.’” (Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living*, pp. 168–69).

Alma 13:3, 5. “In the First Place”

“Alma says that those ‘ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God’ were ‘in the first place,’ that is in pre-existence, ‘on the same standing with their brethren,’ meaning that initially all had equal opportunity to progress through righteousness” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 477).

Alma 13:4–5. Free Agency in the Premortal World

“God gave his children their free agency even in the spirit world, by which the individual spirits had the privilege, just as men have here, of choosing the good and rejecting the evil, or partaking of the evil to suffer the consequences of their sins. Because of this, some even there were more faithful than others in keeping the commandments of the Lord. Some were of greater intelligence than others, as we find it here, and were honored accordingly. . . .

“The spirits of men had their free agency, some were greater than others, and from among them the Father called and foreordained his prophets and rulers. Jeremiah and Abraham were two of them. . . . The spirits of men were not equal. They may have had an equal start, and we know they were all innocent in the beginning; but the right of free agency which was given to them enabled some to outstrip others, and thus, through the eons of immortal existence, to become more intelligent, more faithful, for they were free to act for themselves, to think for themselves, to receive the truth or rebel against it” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:58–59).

Alma 13:6–10. Ordained to Be Teachers

Those who proved faithful in the spirit world are appointed to teach the commandments of God in this life (see Alma 13:6). Why would this seem a desirable thing for the Lord to do?

Alma 13:11–12. Abhorrence of Sin

Regarding Alma 13:11–12, Elder Spencer W. Kimball wrote:

“This passage indicates an attitude which is basic to the sanctification we should all be seeking, and thus to the repentance which merits forgiveness. It is that the former transgressor must have reached a ‘point of no return’ to sin wherein there is not merely a renunciation but also a deep abhorrence of the sin—where the sin becomes most distasteful to him and where the desire or urge to sin is cleared out of his life.

“Surely this is what is meant, in part at least, by being pure in heart! And when we read in the Sermon on the Mount that the ‘pure in heart’ shall see God, it gives meaning to the Lord’s statement, made through the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1832, that presently impure people can perfect themselves and become pure:

“‘Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will.’ (D&C 88:68.)” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 354–55).

Alma 13:13–19. Melchizedek

The following information and references will help you understand more about Melchizedek:

1. Melchizedek lived about 2000 B.C. (see *Melchizedek* in the Bible Dictionary).
2. He was righteous even from his youth and received divine protection (see JST, Genesis 14:26–40).
3. The Church in ancient days called the holy priesthood after his name (see D&C 107:2–4).
4. Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek (see D&C 84:14).

Alma 13:27–31. “Anxiety Even unto Pain”

Alma was so concerned for the welfare of the people of Ammonihah that it caused him pain (see Alma 13:27, Mosiah 25:11). Such sensitivity is a Godlike characteristic to which Latter-day Saints may well aspire.

Notice the counsel Alma gave the people to keep them from being “bound down by the chains of hell” and suffering “the second death” (Alma 13:30; see also Helaman 14:18).

Alma 14:1–5. A Divided People

Notice in Alma 14:1–5 how the word of God divided the people. Why would this happen? Could

this be part of what Jesus meant when he said that he came to bring not peace but a sword, and that because of the gospel a man’s foes might be those of his own household? (see Matthew 10:34–36). This is precisely what happened to Amulek as a result of his conversion (see Alma 15:16).

Brigham Young said: “The Gospel of salvation is perfectly calculated to cause division. It strikes at the root of the very existence of mankind in their wickedness, evil designs, passions, and wicked calculations. There is no evil among the human family, but at the foundation of which it strikes effectually, and comes in contact with every evil passion that rises in the heart of man. It is opposed to every evil practice of men, and consequently it disturbs them in the wicked courses they are pursuing” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:235).

Alma 14:8–11. The Suffering of the Righteous

Alma and Amulek had the power to bring down punishment upon the wicked men who killed the believers of the word of God. But Alma would not use his power in that manner. He explained that God permits the righteous to suffer for a purpose (see Alma 14:11).

“Now, we find many people critical when a righteous person is killed, a young father or mother is taken from a family, or when violent deaths occur. Some become bitter when oft-repeated prayers seem unanswered. Some lose faith and turn sour when solemn administrations by holy men seem to be ignored and no restoration seems to come from repeated prayer circles. But if all the sick were healed, if all the righteous were protected and the wicked destroyed, the whole program of the Father would be annulled and the basic principle of the gospel, free agency, would be ended.

“If pain and sorrow and total punishment immediately followed the doing of evil, no soul would repeat a misdeed. If joy and peace and rewards were instantaneously given the doer of good, there could be no evil—all would do good and not because of the rightness of doing good. There would be no test of strength, no development of character, no growth of powers, no free agency, no Satanic controls.

“Should all prayers be immediately answered according to our selfish desires and our limited understanding, then there would be little or no suffering, sorrow, disappointment, or even death; and if these were not, there would also be an absence of

joy, success, resurrection, eternal life, and godhood” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Tragedy or Destiny,” *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1966, pp. 180, 210).

Alma 15:1–12. Spiritual Well-being and Physical Health

Discussing the relationship between peace of mind and physical well-being, Elder Boyd K. Packer said:

“I recently asked a doctor of family medicine how much of his time was devoted purely to correcting physical disorders. He has a large practice, and after thoughtfully considering, he answered, ‘Not more than 20 percent. The rest of the time I seem to be working on problems that very much affect the physical well-being of my patients but do not originate in the body.

“‘These physical disorders,’ the doctor concluded, ‘are merely symptoms of some other kind of trouble.’ . . .

“There is another part of us, not so tangible, but quite as real as our physical body. This intangible part of us is described as mind, emotion, intellect, temperament, and many other things. Very seldom is it described as spiritual.

“But there is a *spirit* in man; to ignore it is to ignore reality. There are spiritual disorders, too, and spiritual diseases that can cause intense suffering.

“The body and the spirit of man are bound together. Often, very often, when there are disorders, it is very difficult to tell which is which” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, p. 89; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 59).

Alma 16:1–11. The Destruction of Ammonihah

We are told that “Satan had gotten great hold upon the hearts of the people of the city of Ammonihah” (Alma 8:9). In spite of the powerful preaching of Alma and Amulek and the conversion of Zeezrom and others, the majority of the people rejected their last chance for averting destruction, putting to death those who had been converted. In their wickedness, the people haughtily told Alma, “We will not believe thy words if thou shouldst prophesy that this great city should be destroyed in one day” (Alma 9:4). Alma 16:1–11 tells how this mocking taunt was literally fulfilled and the people were utterly destroyed in one day.

Alma 16:12–21. “Victory over the Devil”

How many years did it take for Alma and those who assisted him in preaching the word of God to

establish the people in the ways of truth once more? (compare Alma 4:20 with Alma 16:21).

Points to Ponder

- On what basis are men foreordained to receive the priesthood?
- Why does the Lord sometimes allow innocent people to suffer at the hands of wicked people? (see Alma 14:9–11, 60:13, D&C 136:39).
- What was the key ingredient in the spiritual healing of Zeezrom and Alma? (see Alma 15:5–11, 36:17–19).
- Amulek gave up much for the gospel (see Alma 15:16). Even though you may not be called upon to give up as much, what are some things you might be asked to sacrifice?

Chapter 27

Alma 17–22

Introduction

The account of the missionary labors of the sons of Mosiah is an example of how servants of the Lord can successfully bring souls unto him.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 17:1–8. Successful Missionaries

Alma met the sons of Mosiah as they were returning from their highly successful, fourteen-year mission to the Lamanites. Mormon explained why the sons of Mosiah were such successful missionaries: “They had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God” (Alma 17:3). Mormon also explained how the sons of Mosiah became successful missionaries:

1. “They had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth” because “they had searched the scriptures diligently” to know the word of God (v. 2).
2. They had prayed and fasted much (see v. 3).
3. They had willingly served the Lord under difficult and trying circumstances (see vv. 4–5).

Later in the account Ammon declared that “the field was ripe” and ready to be harvested (Alma 26:5). It is not surprising, then, that the efforts and sacrifices of the sons of Mosiah succeeded in bringing thousands of Lamanites into the Church and provided such marvelous experiences.

Alma 17:9–12, 16. Good Examples

Why did the sons of Mosiah want to share the gospel with a people who hated and despised them? (see Alma 17:9–12, 16; see also Mosiah 28:1–3).

When the sons of Mosiah prayed for success in their mission to the Lamanites, the Lord told them to “be patient in long-suffering and afflictions” (Alma 17:11). What did the Lord say was the purpose for this? Often our sincere love for people and our good example can do more to interest them in the gospel than what we might say.

Alma 17:13–16. Wild, Hardened, and Ferocious

Mormon’s statement that the work undertaken by the sons of Mosiah “was great, for they had undertaken to preach the word of God to a wild and a hardened and a ferocious people” was no exaggeration (Alma 17:14). After Nephi and his people separated themselves from the people of Laman and Lemuel, the Lamanites fell deeper and deeper into darkness. Nephi reported that the Lamanites became “an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety” (2 Nephi 5:24). Enos reported that “they became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness” (Enos 1:20), and his son Jarom wrote that the Lamanites “loved murder and would drink the blood of beasts” (Jarom 1:6).

There are indications, however, that the Lord had begun to prepare the Lamanites to accept the gospel. They had interaction with various Nephite groups such as Zeniff’s colony, and even apostate groups like the Amulonites (the wicked priests of Noah), and were taught many things, including the Nephite language (see Mosiah 24:1–7). Such teachings may have provided an initial preparation for the Lamanites that later led the way to their conversion by the sons of Mosiah.

Alma 17:29. “The Power Which Is in Me”

“I’ve seen courage in the military. I’ve witnessed courage in the classrooms of learning and the factories of industry. Never have I observed its beauty more radiant than reflected from the service of a missionary. As a member of the Missionary Executive Committee of the Church, I often interview prospective missionaries who have physical impairments or other shortcomings. In considering the recommendation of one such candidate, the bishop of the ward had written: ‘Brother _____ is badly scarred due to an automobile accident. However, if courage will help, he’ll lead the lot.’ I made an appointment to visit with the lad. My initial reaction upon meeting him was one of mixed surprise and pity. His face was badly scarred. He had been trapped in a burning automobile. Gone were his eyebrows, eyelashes, portions of his nose and face. ‘Son,’ I responded, ‘if you were in the mission field, there would be those who would reject your message and you may feel that they were rejecting you. This would be unbearable.’

“‘Brother Monson,’ he replied, ‘I have become accustomed to that challenge. It doesn’t bother me anymore. I so much want to serve the Lord and to preach the gospel. Please let me be called.’ The courage of his spirit bore witness to me of his faith. He received a call. After two years of outstanding missionary activity, his president wrote, upon the occasion of his honorable release:

“‘The bearer of this letter has served in this mission for two years. He has been one of the finest missionaries in our mission over the whole time that he has been here. He has been effective as a leader, as a proselyting missionary, as the liaison between the mission office and the several stakes in which he has served, and in all respects his performance has been without flaw.

“‘He has handled his personal problem, his severe scarring, in a way which has discouraged or affronted no one. It has been on a basis that “this is my problem; don’t worry about it.”

“‘We love him dearly. We are grateful for his services; and if you have any more just like him, send them along.’” (Thomas S. Monson, *Pathways to Perfection*, pp. 145–46).

Alma 19:19–36. “Overpowered by the Spirit”

Those who do not have the Spirit of the Lord are unable to discern the workings of God. The Apostle Paul taught that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). On the day of Pentecost many of the Jews thought the disciples were drunk (see Acts 2:1–13), and some of the people in Enoch’s day took Enoch for a wild man (see Moses 6:38). The reactions of the Lamanites when they saw Ammon and the household of King Lamoni in a trance, overpowered by the Spirit, were similar.

Alma 19:33 shows one of the clearest evidences of conversion. What is this evidence of true conversion?

Alma 20. King Lamoni’s Father

The Lord guided Ammon in meeting King Lamoni’s father. Why was it better for Ammon to meet King Lamoni’s father the way he did rather than in his father’s own land? Besides Ammon’s physical strength, what else about him impressed King Lamoni’s father? (see Alma 20:26–27). Ammon, with the help of the Lord, set up a true teaching moment by the way he acted in a crisis.

Note in verse 29 how the brethren of Ammon kept the Lord’s counsel given in Alma 17:11.

Alma 21:1–3. The Amalekites and the Amulonites

“The Amalekites were a sect of Nephite apostates whose origin is not given. Very early in the days of the Republic they had affiliated with the Lamanites, and with them, as we have noted, built a large city which they called *Jerusalem*. They were exceedingly crafty and hard-hearted. They, a short time afterward, led in the massacres of the Christian Lamanites, or people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. In later years, the Lamanite commanders were in the habit of placing them in high positions in their armies, evidently because of their greater force of character, their intense hatred of their former brethren, and also their more wicked and murderous disposition. In the Sacred Record they are generally associated with the Zoramites and Amulonites.

“The Amulonites were the descendants of Amulon and his associate wicked priests of King Noah. They were Nephites on their father’s side, and Lamanites on their mother’s, but by association and education, were of the latter race.

“Many of them, however, were displeased with the conduct of their fathers and took upon themselves the name of Nephites, and were considered among that people ever after. Of those who remained Amulonites, many became followers of Nehor and were scattered in the Lands of Amulon, Helam, and Jerusalem, all of which appear to have been districts in the same region of country. It is recorded of them that not one repented and received the Gospel Message that was preached by the sons of King Mosiah; on the contrary, they became leaders in the persecution carried on against the suffering people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi” (George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 3:290).

Alma 21:4–23. The Order of the Nehors

The order of the Nehors began with the anti-Christ named Nehor (see Alma 1:1–16). Alma 21:6–8 illustrates some of their false beliefs:

1. They thought that simply meeting together constituted worshipping God (see v. 6).
2. They believed that God would save all men (see v. 6).
3. They denied Christ, saying that no man could know of things to come (see vv. 7–8).

The ruins of Ammonihah were called Desolation of Nehors because it had been the teachings of the order of the Nehors that hardened the hearts of the people of Ammonihah to the point where they were destroyed (see Alma 16:11). The efforts of Aaron and his brethren to preach the word of God to a people following the same beliefs shows how very committed these missionaries were to the Lord.

Alma 21:19–23 describes one of the purposes of government—to allow the free exercise of religious worship.

Alma 22:5–11. The Great Spirit

Aaron needed some common understanding from which to start teaching the gospel to King Lamoni’s father. The Lamanites believed in a Great Spirit who had created all things (see Alma 22:11), so Aaron began with this basic principle in teaching the king.

Concerning the Lamanite’s belief in the Great Spirit, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “According to Lamanite traditions, God is the *Great Spirit*. It is obvious that by this designation the Lamanites had in mind a personal being, for King Lamoni mistakenly supposed that Ammon was the Great Spirit. (Alma 18:2–28; 19:25–27.) Both Ammon and Aaron, using the same principle of salesmanship applied by Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22–31), taught that the Great Spirit was the God who created the heavens and the earth. (Alma 18:8–29; 22:8–11.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 340).

Alma 22:18. To Know God

President Ezra Taft Benson used the example of King Lamoni’s father to explain that we must forsake sin to know the Savior and receive joy:

“I cite for you an example of a man whose life was changed to a more Christlike life after he earnestly desired such a change and sought the Lord’s help.

“Lamoni’s father was a king who had bitter enmity toward the Nephites. A great missionary by the name of Aaron—one of the sons of Mosiah—had come to the Lamanite nation to bring them the gospel. He proceeded to the king’s home and subsequently engaged him in a gospel discussion about the purpose of life. Once the king became receptive to his message, Aaron taught him about Christ, the plan of salvation, and the possibility of eternal life.

“This message so impressed the king that he asked Aaron, ‘What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do

that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy’ (Alma 22:15).

“Aaron instructed him to call upon God in faith to help him repent of all his sins. The king, anxious for his own soul, did as Aaron instructed:

“‘O God,’ he prayed, ‘Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and *I will give away all my sins to know thee*’ (Alma 22:18; italics added).

“Now I want you, my brethren, to hear again this humble man’s words: ‘I will give away *all my sins to know thee*.’

“Brethren, each of us must surrender our sins if we are to really know Christ. For we do not know Him until we become like Him. There are some, like this king, who must pray until they, too, have ‘a wicked spirit rooted’ from them so they can find the same joy” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, pp. 62–63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 43).

Points to Ponder

- What were some of the things that the sons of Mosiah did that helped them become successful missionaries? (see Alma 17:2–3, 5, 9–13).
- Read Alma 18:8–10. Notice how Ammon fulfilled his position as a servant to King Lamoni. How can this example be applied in your life?
- What are some of the things we must do to receive eternal life? (see Alma 22:15–16).

Chapter 28

Alma 23–29

Introduction

Even in the midst of war and persecution, righteous participants received unspeakable joy and happiness because of the harvest of souls brought to God through missionary work.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 23. Missionary Work

Note in Alma 23:8–13 the extent of the missionary success of Ammon and his brethren. Those converted Lamanites were blessed “to be a very industrious people; . . . and the curse of God did no more follow them” (v. 18).

Speaking about the missionary work yet to be done and the blessings that will come to those nations and people who accept the gospel, President Spencer W. Kimball said:

“If we are to fulfill the responsibility given to us by the Lord on the Mount of Olives to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, then we will need to open the doors to these nations. . . . We’ve hardly scratched the surface. We need far more missionaries, and we need more countries that will think of us as being their friends and will give us an opportunity to come into their nations and give to their people the finest thing in the world—the gospel of Christ—which can be their salvation and their great happiness.

“. . . We will make them good citizens, we will make them good souls, and we will make them happy and joyous” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1978, p. 66; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, pp. 45–46).

Alma 24:30. Leaving Neutral Ground

“When the Prophet [Joseph Smith] had ended telling how he had been treated [by apostates], Brother Behunin remarked: ‘If I should leave this Church I would not do as those men have done: I would go to some remote place where Mormonism had never been heard of[,] settle down, and no one would ever learn that I knew anything about it.’

“The great Seer immediately replied: ‘Brother Behunin, you don’t know what you would do. No doubt these men once thought as you do. Before you

joined this Church you stood on neutral ground. When the gospel was preached good and evil were set before you. You could choose either or neither. There were two opposite masters inviting you to serve them. When you joined this Church you enlisted to serve God. When you did that you left the neutral ground, and you never can get back on to it. Should you forsake the Master you enlisted to serve it will be by the instigation of the evil one, and you will follow his dictation and be his servant.’

“He emphasized the fact that a man or woman who had not taken sides either with Christ or belial could maintain a neutral position, but when they enlisted under either the one or the other they left the neutral ground forever” (Daniel Tyler, in “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 15 Aug. 1892, p. 492).

Alma 25:1–12. Prophecy Fulfilled

Alma 25:1–12 records the fulfillment of Abinadi’s prophecy regarding the wicked priests of Noah (see Mosiah 17:15–20). Note how events developed naturally and led to the destruction of Ammonihah (see Alma 25:1–2).

Alma 25:13–16. The Law of Moses

The converted Lamanites understood, as did the righteous Nephites, that salvation did not come through obedience to the law of Moses alone (see Alma 25:16; see also Mosiah 13:27–33). The converted Lamanites understood that the law of Moses served an important purpose until the Savior completed his mission in mortality. Through observance of the law of Moses, these Lamanites could look forward to the coming of Christ, with the law serving as a type, or representation, of Christ and his mission. Thus they kept the law of Moses because they had been commanded to do so, and by living with faith in Christ they received a remission of their sins.

Alma 25:17. Promises Fulfilled

One of the great lessons that emerges from this section of the Book of Mormon is that God always keeps his promises. In Alma 25:17 Mormon recorded that God had “verified his word unto [the sons of Mosiah] in every particular.” The Lord had told King Mosiah that many would believe his sons’

teachings and that He would deliver them “out of the hands of the Lamanites” (Mosiah 28:7). For the fulfillment of these promises see Alma 17:4, 35–39; 19:22–23; 26:1–4.

Alma 26:5–7. The Sheaves of Missionary Work

The word *sheaves* means quantities of stalks and heads of grain bound together. Ammon’s mention of sheaves in Alma 26:5 refers to the converts brought into the Church by those faithful missionaries who had thrust in their sickle.

We each owe our membership in the Church to the faithfulness of others. Note these grateful words of President David O. McKay:

“A short time ago, I stood in a little room in Wales, in which my mother was born 102 years before, the room so small that the six-foot bed covers the entire width, and its length is barely two feet longer than it is wide, and the old rafters just two feet above my head, so about eight feet high. But my thoughts on that occasion have been sacred to me. I share one or two with you.

“I thought, as Sister McKay and I stood in that small bedroom, how different life would be now if two humble elders had not knocked at that door a hundred years ago! And how different life would be if my mother’s father and mother had not accepted that message! I looked around the village and found descendants of others who heard it at that time, descendants of some who ridiculed my grandfather and grandmother for having accepted the truth; and they made light of their religion, scoffed at them and ostracized them for having accepted Mormonism. I realized how unenlightened those neighbors were when they condemned my grandparents. . . .

“. . . Father’s folk were way up in the north of Scotland. It was only through the gospel that Father and Mother met. So I expressed gratitude, as I sensed it probably never so keenly before, as we stood in that little room, six by eight” (*Gospel Ideals*, pp. 122–23).

Alma 26:13–16. Ammon’s Great Rejoicing

Ammon felt great joy in the conversion of his Lamanite brethren. He recognized that it was God’s power that brought about their conversion and that he and his missionary brethren were merely instruments in God’s hands in doing the Lord’s work.

Brigham Young said the following regarding the Lord’s power in conversion: “I had only traveled a short time to testify to the people, before I learned this

one fact, that you might prove doctrine from the Bible till doomsday, and it would merely convince a people, but would not convert them. You might read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and prove every iota that you advance, and that alone would have no converting influence upon the people. Nothing short of a testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost would bring light and knowledge to them—bring them in their hearts to repentance. Nothing short of that would ever do. You have frequently heard me say that I would rather hear an Elder, either here or in the world, speak only five words accompanied by the power of God, and they would do more good than to hear long sermons without the Spirit. This is true, and we know it” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 330).

Alma 26:22. “The Mysteries of God”

President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“There are in the gospel such things as mysteries. A mystery is, of course, some truth which is not understood. All the principles of the gospel and all truth pertaining to the salvation of men are simple when understood. Until it is understood, however, a simple truth may be a great mystery.

“Gospel truths appeal more to the spirit, that is, they are spiritually discerned. A man may know a thing to be true by the teaching of the Spirit, but he may not be able to explain it to others. This may not be in keeping with modern worldly teaching, but it is true nevertheless. Revelations through the Spirit of the Lord, many times, cannot be explained. . . .

“The best educated man in the world may not be able to comprehend the simple truths of the gospel because his soul is not in tune; he has not been enlightened by the Spirit of the Lord. He, therefore, fails to *see* and *feel* the significance of these principles. . . .

“To understand spiritual things, a man must have spiritual discernment, that is, guidance by the Holy Ghost. For this reason we are confirmed and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:296–97).

Alma 28:1–12. The Death of the Righteous

The death of the body is not the worst thing that can happen to a person. The Lord said: “Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection” (D&C 42:45).

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “The only difference between the old and young dying is, one lives longer in heaven and eternal light and glory than the other, and is freed a little sooner from this miserable, wicked world” (*History of the Church*, 4:554).

He later said:

“More painful to me are the thoughts of annihilation than death. If I have no expectation of seeing my father, mother, brothers, sisters and friends again, my heart would burst in a moment, and I should go down to my grave.

“The expectation of seeing my friends in the morning of the resurrection cheers my soul and makes me bear up against the evils of life. It is like their taking a long journey, and on their return we meet them with increased joy” (*History of the Church*, 5:362).

Alma 28:13–14. “Thus We See”

Mormon often used the phrase “thus we see” when he desired to impress a lesson upon his readers (see Alma 24:19, 27; 28:13–14; 30:60). At the end of his recital of the missionary labors of the sons of Mosiah and the subsequent battles between the Lamanites and the Nephites, Mormon emphasized two main points:

1. There is a great inequality of man due to sin, transgression, and the power of the devil. Satan devises cunning plans to ensnare the hearts of men and lead them to destruction (see Alma 28:13).
2. There is a great need for righteous men to labor diligently in the vineyards of the Lord and lead men back to God (see v. 14).

Alma 29:1–8. “O That I Were An Angel”

Alma’s desire to preach and “cry repentance unto every people” (Alma 29:1) was a normal one for a man who loved the souls of men. He had tasted the fruits of the gospel and desired that all men should partake of it. But Alma also knew that God allots to men “all that he seeth fit that they should have” (v. 8). Elder Henry D. Moyle said:

“I believe that we, as fellow workers in the priesthood, might well take to heart the admonition of Alma and be content with that which God hath allotted us. We might well be assured that we had something to do with our ‘allotment’ in our pre-existent state. This would be an additional reason for us to accept our present condition and make the best of it. It is what we agreed to do. . . .

“. . . We had our own free agency in our pre-mortal existence, and whatever we are today is likely the result of that which we willed to be heretofore” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1952, p. 71).

Points to Ponder

- Why did the Amalekites and the Amulonites not join the Church? (see Alma 23:14, 24:29–30).
- What evidence is there that many of the Lamanites were truly converted? (see Alma 24:12–27).

Chapter 29

Alma 30–33

Introduction

In Alma 30–33 you will read of the confrontation between the prophet Alma and the anti-Christ Korihor. You will also learn about the apostate Zoramites and the mission to reclaim them. Of particular significance is Alma’s discourse on faith.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 30:6. Anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon

“The Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. It confounds false doctrines and lays down contention. (See 2 Ne. 3:12.) It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and doctrines of the devil in our day. The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon are similar to the type we have today. God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious and philosophical concepts of our time” (Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, pp. 94–95; or *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 64).

Alma 30:6. Anti-Christ through the Ages

“An *antichrist* is an opponent of Christ; he is one who is in opposition to the true gospel, the true Church, and the true plan of salvation. (1 John 2:19; 4:4–6.) He is one who offers salvation to men on some other terms than those laid down by Christ. Sherem (Jac. 7:1–23), Nehor (Alma 1:2–16), and Korihor (Alma 30:6–60) were antichrists who spread their delusions among the Nephites” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 39).

Alma 30:7–11. “No Law Against a Man’s Belief”

Alma 30:7–11 discusses how civil law relates to agency. Each person is endowed by God with the right to choose his own beliefs. Civil law should ensure that each person has this right. Civil law should also protect a person from those who would deprive him of this agency. Under Nephite law Korihor was free to believe and speak what he desired as long as he did not deprive others of their right to do the same.

Brigham Young taught that even in the Millennium, when all shall bow before Christ and

accept him as King, people will still be allowed to have agency and choose how they wish to worship:

“They will ask, ‘If I bow the knee and confess that he is that Saviour, the Christ, to the glory of the Father, will you let me go home and be a Presbyterian?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘And not persecute me?’ ‘Never.’ ‘Won’t you let me go home and belong to the Greek Church?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Will you allow me to be a Friend Quaker, or a Shaking Quaker?’ ‘O yes, anything you wish to be, but remember that you must not persecute your neighbors, but must mind your own business, and let your neighbors alone, and let them worship the sun, moon, a white dog, or anything else they please, being mindful that every knee has got to bow and every tongue confess. When you have paid this tribute to the Most High, who created you and preserves you, you may then go and worship what you please, or do what you please, if you do not infringe upon your neighbors.’” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:317).

Brigham Young also taught that the kingdom of God will be the means of protecting this freedom of worship (see *Journal of Discourses*, 6:344–45).

Alma 30:12–18. Korihor’s Teachings

“Korihor insisted on a strictly rational and scientific approach to all problems, anything else being but ‘the effect of a frenzied mind’ (Alma 30:13–16); he crusaded against the tyranny of ancient traditions and primitive superstitions, which led people to believe things which just ‘are not so,’ (Alma 30:16), calling for an emancipation from ‘the silly traditions of their fathers.’ (Alma 30:31.) He called for a new morality with the shedding of old inhibitions (Alma 30:17–18, 25.) He called for economic liberation from priestly exploitation (Alma 30:27), demanding that all be free to ‘make use of that which is their own.’ (Alma 30:28.) He preached a strict no-nonsense naturalism: ‘. . . when a man died, that was the end thereof,’ (Alma 30:18), and its corollary, which was a strict materialism: ‘. . . therefore every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature. . . .’ (Alma 30:17.) From this followed a clear-cut philosophy of laissez-faire: ‘Therefore every man prospereth according to his genius, and . . . every man conquered according to his strength,’ with right and wrong measured only by nature’s iron rule of success

and failure: ‘. . . and whatsoever a man did was no crime.’ (Alma 30:17.) It was survival of the fittest applied to human behavior, and the removal of old moral and sentimental restraints was good news to many people, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading many away . . . to commit whoredoms. . . .’ (Alma 30:18.) Along with his attitude of emancipation Korihor cultivated a crusading zeal and intolerance of any opposition which has been thoroughly characteristic of his school of thought in modern times, calling all opposition ‘foolish’ (Alma 30:13–14), ‘silly’ (Alma 30:31), and the evidence of frenzied and deranged minds. (Alma 30:16.) And while for Alma a free society was one in which anybody could think and say whatever he chose (Alma 30:7–12), for Korihor the only free society was one in which everyone thought exactly as *he* thought (Alma 30:24)—which was also the liberal gospel of Huxley, Dewey, Marx, et al.

“The philosophy of Korihor with its naturalism, materialism, and moral relativism, is the prevailing philosophy of our own day, as was foreseen in the Book of Mormon: ‘Yea . . . there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth . . . when there shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.’ (Mormon 8:31.) Enormously proud of their accomplishments, ‘the Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block.’ (2 Nephi 26:20.) Their own expertise is the highest court of appeal, as they ‘preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain and grind upon the faces of the poor.’ (2 Nephi 26:20.) The theologians ‘set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world,’ (2 Nephi 20:29), as they ‘contend one with another . . . teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost. . . .’ (2 Nephi 28:4.)” (Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, pp. 416–18).

Alma 30:23–36. Korihor’s Accusations

Imputing evil motives to Church leaders as Korihor did (see Alma 30:23–28) was also used by the wicked Nephites in discounting the prophecies of Samuel the Lamanite (see Helaman 16:21). Korihor then denounced the Fall, the Atonement, and revelation—some of the most basic doctrines of the kingdom of God.

The word *blaspheme*, as used in Alma 30:30, means to speak evil of or to revile against God.

Note how Alma explained to Korihor that one of the evidences of the truthfulness of the gospel was the joy it produced in the hearts of the people (see vv. 34–35).

Alma 30:37–43. Seeking Signs

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the following about seeking signs: “I will give you one of the Keys of the mysteries of the Kingdom. It is an eternal principle, that has existed with God from all eternity: That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy; and if he does not repent, will apostatize, as God lives. The principle is as correct as the one that Jesus put forth in saying that he who seeketh a sign is an adulterous person; and that principal is eternal, undeviating, and firm as the pillars of heaven; for whenever you see a man seeking after a sign, you may set it down that he is an adulterous man” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 156–57).

Alma 30:44–45. Testimony of God

Alma first asked Korihor to give evidence that God did not exist, and Korihor could not give this evidence (see Alma 30:40). Alma then gave the following evidence for God’s existence: Alma’s own personal testimony (see v. 39), the testimonies of members of the Church (see v. 44), the testimonies of the prophets (see v. 44), the earth and all things upon it (see v. 44), the order of the universe (see v. 44).

Speaking of the last two evidences, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley said:

“Can any man who has walked beneath the stars at night, can anyone who has seen the touch of spring upon the land doubt the hand of divinity in creation? So observing the beauties of the earth, one is wont to speak as did the Psalmist: ‘The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.’ (Ps. 19:1–2.)

“All of beauty in the earth bears the fingerprint of the Master Creator” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, p. 90; or *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 59).

Alma 30:46–53. “Pleasing Unto the Carnal Mind”

After being struck dumb, Korihor admitted that he knew there was a God, but that the devil had deceived

him (see Alma 30:52–53). It is interesting that Sherem, another anti-Christ, had also admitted that he had been deceived by the power of the devil (see Jacob 7:16–20). How did the devil deceive Korihor? (see Alma 30:53). Does Satan have the power to appear as an angel? (see 2 Corinthians 11:14, 2 Nephi 9:9, D&C 128:20). Why was Korihor unable to detect the devil?

“No man knows the spirit of the devil, and his power and influence, but by possessing intelligence which is more than human, and having unfolded through the medium of the Priesthood the mysterious operations of his devices; without knowing the angelic form, the sanctified look and gesture, and the zeal that is frequently manifested by him for the glory of God, together with the prophetic spirit, the gracious influence, the godly appearance, and the holy garb, which are so characteristic of his proceedings and his mysterious windings.

“A man must have the discerning of spirits before he can drag into daylight this hellish influence and unfold it unto the world in all its soul-destroying, diabolical, and horrid colors; for nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 205).

Alma 30:53 unmasks Korihor’s real reason for teaching that there was no God. Korihor explained that he taught what he did because it was “pleasing unto the carnal mind” (v. 53). The word *carnal* refers to the sensual and worldly desires of man, such as lust and greed, which are contrary to godliness. Why do morality and other virtues often no longer seem important when a belief in God is taken away?

Alma 31:1–4. Inciting War

The Nephites feared that the Zoramites would incite the Lamanites to war, which is what actually happened later (see Alma 35:10–11, 43:4–10). This happens in modern times as well. Leaders in power want war for their own wicked purposes, so they stir up their people through hate campaigns and propaganda to the point where they will go to war.

Alma 31:6–38. Apostate Zoramites

We do not have much information on the origin of the Zoramites. Alma 30:59 indicates that the Zoramites had dissented from the Nephites under the leadership of a man named Zoram. The following is a summary of what we know about their apostate condition:

They did not observe the law of Moses (see Alma 31:9).

They had forsaken daily prayer (see v. 10).

They perverted the ways of the Lord (see v. 11).

They built synagogues for the purpose of worshiping one day a week (see v. 12).

They built a prayer stand from which they offered the same prayer (see vv. 13–18).

They believed God was and would always be a spirit (see v. 15).

They believed the traditional beliefs of the Nephites were false (see v. 16).

They believed there would be no Christ (see v. 16).

They believed they were chosen to be the elect of God (see vv. 16–17).

When Alma saw the apostate condition of the Zoramites he knew what their problem was. According to verses 24–29, why do people often invent their own forms of worship?

Note in verses 30–35 Alma’s prayer for his companions and the success of their mission. It was during this mission that Alma’s son Corianton fell to the seductive temptations of the harlot Isabel (see Alma 39:2–3).

Alma 32:1–16. Discourse to the Humble

Alma 32 contains one of the most significant discourses on the doctrine of faith found anywhere in the scriptures. The Zoramites had been living in a state of apostasy and had been taught false doctrine; therefore, Alma taught those spiritually immature listeners the first steps in developing faith. Despite the simplicity of its presentation, the concepts taught in this discourse are profound.

Alma 32:17–43. Developing Faith

Alma’s discourse on faith provides a clear view of the kind of faith every Church member should have. Alma’s approach is spiritually, intellectually, and scientifically appealing:

A. Hypothesis—

1. There are unseen realities—things not seen, but true (see Alma 32:21).
2. “If ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true” (v. 21), but you do not have a perfect knowledge of them. By *perfect knowledge* Alma seems to mean knowledge gained through one’s own

experiences (see vv. 17–18, 21, 26, 33–34). The person who operates from a basis of faith is willing to accept a different kind of evidence than that gained through the senses. Paul taught that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (JST, Hebrews 11:1). Alma promised that if a person would experiment upon the word he would have special experiences of his own and thus come to a perfect knowledge of its goodness (see Alma 32:33–34).

3. A person cannot at first be sure of the truth of unseen realities. He must begin with faith, and faith is not to have that perfect knowledge (see v. 26).
4. A particle of faith, even a desire to believe, if planted in the heart and nourished properly, can grow into knowledge of the unseen (see v. 27).

B. Experiment—

1. Compare the word of God to a seed (see v. 28).
2. Plant the seed in your heart, not just in your head (see v. 28).
3. Do not cast the seed out by unbelief or resist the Spirit of the Lord that accompanies it (see v. 28).
4. If the seed begins to swell within you and enlarges your soul and enlightens your understanding, it is good; if it does not, it is bad and should be cast away (see vv. 28–32).

C. Conclusions—

1. If the seed begins to grow, faith in its goodness becomes dormant; you know the seed is good (see vv. 33–35).
2. If the seed begins to grow, additional nourishment and care will cause the seed to become a tree that brings forth fruit (see vv. 36–37).
3. If the seed or the tree is neglected, it will wither. This does not mean that the seed was not good. It means that your spiritual ground is barren and unproductive. In other words, the experiment did not fail; you failed the experiment, and you can not enjoy the fruit (see vv. 38–40).

4. If the tree is nourished with diligence, patience, and continuing faith it will spring up “unto everlasting life” (v. 41) and enable you to “pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure” (v. 42).

Alma 32:21. Faith

“Faith, to be faith, must center around something that is not known. Faith, to be faith, must go beyond that for which there is confirming evidence. Faith, to be faith, must go into the unknown. Faith, to be faith, must walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness. If everything has to be known, if everything has to be explained, if everything has to be certified, then there is no need for faith. Indeed, there is no room for it.

“The prophet Alma said: ‘Yea, there are many who do say: If thou wilt show unto us a sign from heaven, then we shall know of a surety; then we shall believe. Now I ask, is that faith? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for if a man knoweth a thing he hath no cause to believe, for he knoweth it. . . . And now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.’ (Alma 32:17–18, 21.)

“There are two kinds of faith. One of them functions ordinarily in the life of every soul. It is the kind of faith born by experience; it gives us certainty that a new day will dawn, that spring will come, that growth will take place. It is the kind of faith that relates us with confidence to that which is scheduled to happen. . . .

“There is another kind of faith, rare indeed. This is the kind of faith that *causes* things to happen. It is the kind of faith that is worthy and prepared and unyielding, and it calls forth things that otherwise would not be. It is the kind of faith that moves people. It is the kind of faith that sometimes moves things. Few men possess it. It comes by gradual growth. It is a marvelous, even a transcendent, power, a power as real and as invisible as electricity. Directed and channeled, it has great effect.

“But faith must be faith. One man tried ‘experimenting’ with faith. He had spoken of his certainty that an event would transpire, and his desires were not brought to pass; the event he so much

yearned for did not happen. Afterward, his bitter comment was, ‘Well, you see, it didn’t happen. I didn’t think it would.’

“In a world filled with skepticism and doubt, the expression ‘seeing is believing’ promotes the attitude, ‘You show me, and I will believe.’ We want all of the proof and all of the evidence first. It seems hard to take things on faith.

“When will we learn that in spiritual things it works the other way about—that believing is seeing? Spiritual belief precedes spiritual knowledge. When we believe in things that are not seen but are nevertheless true, then we have faith” (Boyd K. Packer, “What Is Faith?” in *Faith*, pp. 42–43).

Alma 32:27. “Experiment upon My Words”

“The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ advises men to test its truths in human life. It approves distinctly of the experimental method. The Savior laid down the principle in a luminous statement: ‘My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.’ (John 7:16, 17) On another occasion He repeated the thought: ‘If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works.’ (John 10:37, 38) The words of the Apostle Paul, ‘Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.’ (1 Thessalonians 5:21), are of the same import. There is constant advice in the scriptures to let the effects of gospel living be evidence of its truth, as for example: ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven’ (Matthew 5:16); or ‘Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.’ (1 Peter 2:12)

“Joseph Smith, the Prophet, recognized this method of testing truth. He read the words of James, ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him’ (James 1:5); and, believing in God, he went into the grove to test the reality of the promise there made. Thus came the great First Vision” (John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, pp. 26–27).

Alma 33. How to Exercise Faith

Alma 33 follows the same context as Alma 32. After hearing Alma’s discourse on faith, the Zoramites

wanted to know “in what manner they should begin to exercise their faith” (Alma 33:1). Alma used the words of the prophets Zenos, Zenock, and Moses to support his contention that men must plant the seed before they can ever hope to reap its blessings. The seed Alma had in mind here was a belief in the coming life and in the mission of Christ.

“Cast about your eyes and begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last and judgment day, according to their works.

“And now, my brethren, I desire that ye shall plant this word in your hearts, and as it beginneth to swell even so nourish it by your faith. And behold, it will become a tree springing up in you unto everlasting life” (vv. 22–23).

Alma 33:21–22. “Cast about Your Eyes”

Any person who is to be saved from sin must cast his eye upon the saving power of Jesus Christ. Just as the children of Israel needed to look upon the brazen serpent that Moses fashioned and raised upon a rod in order to be saved from the serpent’s deadly bite, we need to look to the Savior to be saved from the deadly effects of sin (see Numbers 21). The person who opens his eyes and looks upon the Lord will find it easy to recognize him as the divine source from which relief from sin comes.

Points to Ponder

- Summarize Korihor’s false teachings (see Alma 30). How did Alma refute these teachings?
- Compare Alma 31:14–18 to Alma 31:26–35. What differences do you see between the Zoramites’ prayer and Alma’s prayer?
- Read Alma 32, and develop a formula for strengthening your testimony. What role do the scriptures play in this formula?

Chapter 30

Alma 34–35

Introduction

Amulek’s teachings can help you understand more completely the infinite Atonement and your responsibility to be worthy of it. Sacrifice is a vital part of the gospel for all who believe in the Savior and seek the full benefit of his atoning sacrifice.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 34. Amulek’s Teachings

The Lord said, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (D&C 6:28). Following Alma’s teachings to the Zoramites, Amulek rose to bear a second witness of the truth. His comments emphasized the atonement of Christ, the center of the gospel plan. Amulek taught that—

1. An atonement would be made for the sins of men (see Alma 34:8).
2. The sacrifice of Christ would be infinite and eternal (see vv. 10–12).
3. The fulfillment of the law of Moses would be through a “great and last sacrifice” (v. 13). That sacrifice would be the Son of God (see v. 14).
4. The sacrifice of Christ brings about mercy, “which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance” (v. 15).
5. He who exercises “faith unto repentance” (v. 15) is encircled “in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice” (v. 16).
6. Men must call upon God in all places and under all conditions, both for themselves and for others (see vv. 17–29).
7. Men must be willing to assist the poor and the needy and comfort the afflicted (see vv. 28–29).
8. Men must repent when the opportunity is presented, for “now is the time and the day of your salvation” (v. 31), and “this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” (v. 32).

9. If men procrastinate their repentance and fail to “prepare for eternity, . . . the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed” will overtake them (v. 33).
10. The same sinful habits and desires a person allows to maintain control over his spirit in this life “will have power to possess [his] body in that eternal world” (v. 34).
11. Procrastinating repentance until death is evidence that a person has subjected himself to the devil and that the Spirit of the Lord has withdrawn from him (see vv. 35–36).
12. Men should work out their salvation “with fear before God” (v. 37), take upon themselves the name of Christ, humble themselves in worship before God, “live in thanksgiving daily” (v. 38), and “be watchful unto prayer continually” (v. 39) as a defense against the devil.

Alma 34:10. “A Great and Last Sacrifice”

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ ended the practice of blood sacrifice for sin. The Savior said to the Nephites:

“Ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away. . . .

“And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:19–20).

In place of the law of blood sacrifice, the Savior instituted the ordinance of the sacrament. This ordinance serves as a reminder of that “great and last sacrifice” (Alma 34:10). President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., explained:

“Under the new covenant that came in with Christ, the sinner must offer the sacrifice out of his own life, not by offering the blood of some other creature; he must give up his sins, he must repent, he himself must make the sacrifice and that sacrifice was calculated to reach out into the life of the sinner in the future so that he would become a better and changed man. . . .

“. . . Every sinner so repenting, every sinner so sorrowing for the past by an abandonment of the practices of the past, moves into a new world where,

with proper covenants, he thrusts away out of his life the wrongs of the past” (“Meaning of the Peace of Which the Angels Spoke,” *Church News*, 24 Dec. 1960, p. 15).

Alma 34:10–14. An Infinite Atonement

“When the prophets speak of an *infinite* atonement, they mean just that. Its effects cover all men, the earth itself and all forms of life thereon, and reach out into the endless expanses of eternity” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 64).

Alma 34:31. An Immediate Effect

Amulek taught the Zoramites in 74 B.C., over one hundred years before Jesus would actually make the atoning sacrifice. But the people who lived before Christ did not have to wait for the Atonement to have it become effective in their lives. It was applied *immediately* if they exercised faith and repentance.

Those who truly desire repentance, willingly turn to the Lord, and forsake their sins find that the Savior *immediately* effects the plan of redemption in their behalf. A person might expect that it would necessitate years of repentance and sorrow to eradicate years of unrepented sin, but such is not the case. Great changes can be effected *immediately* through deep, heartfelt repentance (see Alma 15:3–11, 22:1–23, 36:11–20).

True repentance brings complete forgiveness. President Harold B. Lee stated:

“If the time comes when you have done all that you can to repent of your sins, whoever you are, wherever you are, and have made amends and restitution to the best of your ability; if it be something that will affect your standing in the Church and you have gone to the proper authorities, then you will want that confirming answer as to whether or not the Lord has accepted of you. In your soul-searching, if you seek for and you find that peace of conscience, by that token you may know that the Lord has accepted of your repentance. Satan would have you think otherwise and sometimes persuade you that now having made one mistake, you might go on and on with no turning back. That is one of the great falsehoods. The miracle of forgiveness is available to all of those who turn from their evil doings and return no more” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, p. 185).

Alma 34:32–35. The Time to Repent

“A man may receive the priesthood and all its privileges and blessings, but until he learns to overcome the flesh, his temper, his tongue, his

disposition to indulge in the things God has forbidden, he cannot come into the celestial kingdom of God—he must overcome either in this life or in the life to come. But this life is the time in which men are to repent. Do not let any of us imagine that we can go down to the grave not having overcome the corruptions of the flesh and then lose in the grave all our sins and evil tendencies. They will be with us. They will be with the spirit when separated from the body.

“It is my judgment that any man or woman can do more to conform to the laws of God in one year in this life than they could in ten years when they are dead. The spirit only can repent and change, and then the battle has to go forward with the flesh afterwards. It is much easier to overcome and serve the Lord when both flesh and spirit are combined as one. This is the time when men are more pliable and susceptible. We will find when we are dead every desire, every feeling will be greatly intensified. When clay is pliable, it is much easier to change than when it gets hard and sets.

“This life is the time to repent. That is why I presume it will take a thousand years after the first resurrection until the last group will be prepared to come forth. It will take them a thousand years to do what it would have taken but three score years and ten to accomplish in this life.

“You remember the vision of the redemption of the dead as given to the Church through the late President Joseph F. Smith. President Smith saw the spirits of the righteous dead before their resurrection and the language is the same as one of the Prophet Joseph’s revelations—that they, the righteous dead, looked upon the absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage.

“I grant you that the righteous dead will be at peace, but I tell you that when we go out of this life, leave this body, we will desire to do many things that we cannot do at all without the body. We will be seriously handicapped, and we will long for the body, we will pray for that early reunion with our bodies. We will know then what advantage it is to have a body. . . .

“The point I have in mind is that we are sentencing ourselves to long periods of bondage, separating our spirits from our bodies, or we are shortening that period, according to the way in which we overcome and master ourselves” (Melvin J. Ballard, *The Three Degrees of Glory*, pp. 11–13).

Alma 34:36–41. “The Hearts of the Righteous”

Amulek told the Zoramites that to obtain eternal life they must do the following things: receive the Holy Ghost and take upon themselves the name of Christ (see Alma 34:38); humble themselves (see v. 38); worship God wherever they were (see v. 38); live in thanksgiving daily (see v. 38); pray continually (see v. 39); bear afflictions with patience (see vv. 40–41).

Alma 35:15. Taking Offense

Speaking of ways in which we can cheat ourselves, President Spencer W. Kimball said:

“We may get angry with our parents, or a teacher, or the bishop, and dwarf ourselves into nameless anonymity as we shrivel and shrink under the venom and poison of bitterness and hatred. While the hated one goes on about his business, little realizing the suffering of the hater, the latter cheats himself.

“. . . To terminate activity in the Church just to spite leaders or to give vent to wounded feelings is to cheat ourselves” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pp. 242–43).

Points to Ponder

- According to Amulek, what would happen if the Atonement had not been made? (see Alma 34:9).
- Why was Christ the only one who could make an infinite atonement?
- What do you think Amulek meant when he said, “Then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed”? (Alma 34:33).

Chapter 31

Alma 36–42

Introduction

Alma’s teachings to his sons could be the teachings of all concerned parents and teachers. Alma taught that wickedness never was true happiness and that joy comes through obedience to God. He also gave personal insights into the Atonement, the law of restoration, and the Judgment.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 36:1–5. Learn from the Past

Most parents would rather their children accept wise counsel from the older generation than plunge ahead and repeat the mistakes of the past. Alma expressed this desire to his son Helaman when he said, “Hear my words and learn of me” (Alma 36:3).

Alma had been a member of a rising generation of young people who “did not believe the tradition of their fathers” (Mosiah 26:1). He had been “a very wicked and an idolatrous man . . . a man of many words, and did speak much flattery to the people; therefore he led many of the people to do after the manner of his iniquities” (Mosiah 27:8). Alma’s conversion after the visitation of an angel radically altered the direction of his life.

Alma wanted his sons to avoid the anguish of spirit he had suffered and to learn when they were young to keep God’s commandments (see Alma 37:35). He testified that the knowledge he had to share did not come through his own wisdom or even his own worthiness, but was revealed to him from God (see Alma 36:4–5).

Alma 36:6–10. Two Days or Three?

“Some readers of the Book of Mormon have claimed there is a discrepancy in the accounts of the conversion of Alma as recorded in Mosiah 27:23 and Alma 36:10. It is true that one account mentions ‘two days and two nights’ and the other says ‘three days and three nights,’ but there is no apparent discrepancy because they are not referring to exactly the same thing. In the account in the book of Mosiah the time element clearly refers to the period of fasting by the priests; no exact length of time is indicated for Alma’s unconscious state. Note the major details of the account: After Alma was confronted by an angel and

realized the enormity of his sins, he fell to the earth almost as if dead. Then he was carried to his father in this helpless condition. The father of Alma then called in the priests of the church and ‘*after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights*, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up.’ (Mosiah 27:22–23. Italics added.) In the account in the book of Alma, however, the term ‘three days and three nights’ clearly refers to the *total time* Alma could not open his mouth nor use his limbs. (Alma 36:10.)” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 217–18).

Alma 36:11–16. Godly Sorrow

Elder Spencer W. Kimball said:

“Young Alma was so deep in his sin that it was most difficult for him to humble himself toward repentance, but when his experiences broke down his resistance, softened his rebellion and overcame his stubbornness, he began to see himself in his true light and appraise his situation as it really was. His hard heart was softened. His repentance was being born. Listen to his words of confession. Though these words of Alma are used in this book in connection with other phases of the gospel, they are repeated here as an indication of conviction of guilt: [Alma 36:12–16.]

“Conviction brought ‘sorrow to repentance’ through torment-racking memory. His sin pains were exquisite and bitter. Alma had convinced himself” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 157–58).

For additional scriptural references to godly sorrow see 2 Corinthians 7:9–10, Mosiah 4:1–3, 3 Nephi 9:20, Mormon 2:12–14, and Moroni 9:25.

Alma 37:1–31. The Sacred Records

Alma entrusted Helaman with the keeping of the sacred records. Alma explained that the records had been kept so that people in succeeding ages might know of the mysteries contained in them (see Alma 37:4). Alma then explained how the records had already benefited the people:

They had “enlarged the memory of this people” (v. 8).

They had “convinced many of the error of their ways” (v. 8).

They had brought many “to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls” (v. 8).

They had helped to convince “thousands of the Lamanites of the incorrect tradition of their fathers” (v. 9).

They had brought those same Lamanites “unto repentance; that is, they brought them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer” (v. 9).

Alma also commanded Helaman to preserve the twenty-four plates of gold found by the people of King Limhi (see Mosiah 8:7–11). Through those records the Lord would reveal “the secret works of those people who [had] been destroyed” (Alma 37:21) and witness to future generations that he would “bring forth out of darkness unto light all their secret works and abominations; and except they repent [he would] destroy them from off the face of the earth” (v. 25).

The Lord said he would reveal those “secrets and abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land” (v. 25). Why would the Lord do this? (see Ether 2:8–12). Alma 37:23 reveals that this unveiling of the secret works of darkness would be accomplished through the Lord’s servant Gazelem, by means of “a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light.” The stone has reference to the interpreters called the Urim and Thummim (see vv. 21, 24, D&C 17:1; see also Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 307–8).

Alma specifically instructed Helaman not to record the secret oaths, covenants, agreements, and signs by which the secret combinations of past ages were perpetuated, lest others reading the sacred record should also start to use them (see Alma 37:27–29; see also Helaman 6:25–26). The American continent is a choice land and it is “cursed . . . forever and ever unto those workers of darkness and secret combinations, even unto destruction, except they repent before they are fully ripe” (Alma 37:31).

Alma 39:1–4. Missionary Standards

Alma said that Corianton had given in to two separate temptations. Corianton had boasted in his own wisdom and strength, and he had forsaken his ministry and fallen into immorality. To the bishops of the Church, President David O. McKay said:

“There are certain standards by which we should be guided in calling our missionaries. . . .

“ . . . The most important standard is character. Let each one whom you interview sense the fact that he is going out as a representative. . . . Sit down with these young men and young women and say, ‘If you accept this call willingly, you go out as a trusted representative of the Church and of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ And to be trusted, young men, is a greater compliment than to be loved, and you cannot violate that trust. You are obligated to keep that trust between now and the time you go to the missionary home” (*Gospel Ideals*, p. 126).

Alma 39:3–6. Sexual Sin

“The doctrine of this Church is that sexual sin—the illicit sexual relations of men and women—stands, in its enormity, next to murder.

“The Lord has drawn no essential distinctions between fornication, adultery, and harlotry or prostitution. Each has fallen under His solemn and awful condemnation.

“You youths of Zion, you cannot associate in non-marital, illicit sex relationships, which is fornication, and escape the punishments and the judgments which the Lord has declared against this sin. The day of reckoning will come just as certainly as night follows day. They who would palliate this crime and say that such indulgence is but a sinless gratification of a normal desire, like appeasing hunger and thirst, speak filthiness with their lips. Their counsel leads to destruction; their wisdom comes from the Father of Lies.

“You husbands and wives who have taken on solemn obligations of chastity in the holy temples of the Lord and who violate those sacred vows by illicit sexual relations with others, you not only commit the vile and loathsome sin of adultery, but you break the oath you yourselves made with the Lord Himself before you went to the altar for your sealing. You become subject to the penalties which the Lord has prescribed for those who breach their covenants with Him” (Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., and David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, p. 11).

Alma 39:6. “Not Easy . . . to Obtain Forgiveness”

Elder Spencer W. Kimball said:

“It is true that the great principle of repentance is always available, but for the wicked and rebellious there are serious reservations to this statement. For instance, sin is intensely habit-forming and sometimes moves men to the tragic point of no return. Without

repentance there can be no forgiveness, and without forgiveness all the blessings of eternity hang in jeopardy. As the transgressor moves deeper and deeper in his sin, and the error is entrenched more deeply and the will to change is weakened, it becomes increasingly near-hopeless, and he skids down and down until either he does not want to climb back or he has lost the power to do so” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 117).

Alma 39:7–8. Cannot Hide Sins

We are each making the record from which we shall be judged. The accounts are kept precisely, and the day will come when the Lord will “reveal the secret acts of men, and the thoughts and intents of their hearts” (D&C 88:109).

President Joseph F. Smith said: “May I say to you that in reality a man cannot forget anything? He may have a lapse of memory; he may not be able to recall at the moment a thing that he knows, or words that he has spoken; he may not have the power at his will to call up these events and words; but let God Almighty touch the mainspring of the memory, and awaken recollection, and you will find then that you have not even forgotten a single idle word that you have spoken!” (“A Sermon on Purity,” *Improvement Era*, May 1903, pp. 503–4).

Alma 39:9–10. “Cross Yourself”

“The meaning of the expression ‘cross yourself’ is clarified in other scriptures. For example, 3 Nephi 12:30 says: ‘For it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell.’ In Matthew 16:24 the Savior says, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.’ Both of these scriptures indicate that to ‘cross yourself’ means to deny yourself. In the [Joseph Smith Translation] of the New Testament the Savior makes it absolutely clear that this is the meaning of the term: ‘And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments’ (Matthew 16:26.)” (Ludlow, *Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 223).

Alma 39:11–12. Leading Others from the Truth

After the Zoramites refused to believe Alma’s teachings because of Corianton’s misconduct, the Spirit of the Lord told Alma, “Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction” (Alma 39:12). People who

might otherwise accept the gospel could decide instead to reject it because some Church members do not demonstrate in their lives the truth of the principles they teach. President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“I think the greatest crime in all this world is to lead men and women, the children of God, away from the true principles. We see in the world today philosophies of various kinds, tending to destroy faith, faith in God, faith in the principles of the gospel. What a dreadful thing that is.

“The Lord says if we labor all our days and save but one soul, how great will be our joy with him; on the other hand how great will be our sorrow and our condemnation if through our acts we have led one soul away from this truth.

“He who blinds one soul, he who spreads error, he who destroys, through his teachings, divine truth, truth that would lead a man to the kingdom of God and to its fulness, how great shall be his condemnation and his punishment in eternity. For the destruction of a soul is the destruction of the greatest thing that has ever been created” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:314).

Alma 39:12–14. “Acknowledge Your Faults”

All sins must be confessed to the Lord in prayer and to those sinned against. Sins which place one’s Church membership in jeopardy must also be confessed to the bishop. Elder Spencer W. Kimball said:

“When one has wronged another in deep transgression or in injuries of lesser magnitude, he, the aggressor, who gave the offense, regardless of the attitude of the other party, should immediately make amends by confessing to the injured one and doing all in his power to clear up the matter and again establish good feelings between the two parties” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 186).

Note that Corianton repented and returned to full activity and participation in the Church (see Alma 43:1–2).

Alma 39:15–19. The Coming of Christ

How did Alma answer Corianton’s wondering about how so much could be known about the Savior prior to his appearance among men?

Alma 40:6–10. God’s Time

Alma said that he did not know if there was more than one time appointed for the resurrection of men, but that it did not matter because “all is as one day

with God, and time only is measured unto men” (Alma 40:8; see also Abraham 3:4, 5:13). Our Father in Heaven has a different perspective of time than we do here in mortality. The Prophet Joseph Smith revealed that where God dwells all things “are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord” (D&C 130:7). The Prophet also said that the Lord “contemplated the whole of the events connected with the earth, pertaining to the plan of salvation, before it rolled into existence or ever ‘the morning stars sang together’ for joy; the past, the present, and the future were and are, with Him, one eternal ‘now’” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 220).

The tenure of mortal man in the finite world has brief and temporary limits attached to the whole of its scope, but God is eternal and unlimited. Paul said:

“Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

“They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

“And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail” (Hebrews 1:10–12).

Alma 40:11–15. Between Death and the Resurrection

The spirits of the righteous are received into a state known as paradise: “a state of happiness, . . . a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:12). However, Elder Orson Pratt noted one limitation to the happiness of those in paradise:

“When our spirits leave these bodies, will they be happy? Not perfectly so. Why? Because the spirit is absent from the body; it cannot be perfectly happy while a part of the man is lying in the earth. How can the happiness be complete when only a part of the redemption is accomplished? You cannot be perfectly happy until you get a new house. You will be happy, you will be at ease in paradise; but still you will be looking for a house where your spirit can enter, and act as you did in former times, only more perfectly, having superior powers. Consequently, all the holy men that have lived in days of old, have looked forward to the resurrection of their bodies; for then their glory will be complete” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:289–90).

The spirits of those who have not been righteous are received into a “spirit prison,” where they remain until they repent. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

“Before Christ bridged the gulf between paradise and hell—so that the righteous could mingle with the wicked and preach them the gospel—the wicked in hell were confined to locations which precluded them from contact with the righteous in paradise. . . .

“Now that the righteous spirits in paradise have been commissioned to carry the message of salvation to the wicked spirits in hell, there is a certain amount of mingling together of the good and bad spirits. Repentance opens the prison doors to the spirits in hell; it enables those bound with the chains of hell to free themselves from darkness, unbelief, ignorance, and sin. As rapidly as they can overcome these obstacles—gain light, believe truth, acquire intelligence, cast off sin, and break the chains of hell—they can leave the hell that imprisons them and dwell with the righteous in the peace of paradise” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 755).

There must be a partial judgment at death to determine into which state a spirit is received. Elder McConkie explained: “Death itself is an initial *day of judgment* for all persons, both the righteous and the wicked. When the spirit leaves the body at death, it is taken home to that God who gave it life, meaning that it returns to live in the realm of spiritual existence. (Eccles. 12:7.) At that time the spirit undergoes a partial judgment and is assigned an inheritance in paradise or in hell to await the day of the first or second resurrection” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 402).

Alma 40:16–22. The First Resurrection

Alma was unsure about the order of the Resurrection, but he gave it as his opinion that “the souls and the bodies are reunited, of the righteous, at the resurrection of Christ, and his ascension into heaven” (Alma 40:20). Concerning the first resurrection, President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“While there was a general resurrection of the righteous at the time Christ arose from the dead, it is customary for us to speak of the resurrection of the righteous at the Second Coming of Christ as the first resurrection. It is the first to us, for we have little thought or concern over that which is past. The Lord has promised that at the time of his Second Advent the graves will be opened, and the just shall come forth to reign with him on the earth for a thousand years. . . .

“At the time of the coming of Christ, ‘They who have slept in their graves shall come forth, for their graves shall be opened; and they also shall be caught up to meet him in the midst of the pillar of heaven—They are Christ’s, the first fruits, they who shall descend with him first, and they who are on the earth and in their graves, who are first caught up to meet him; and all this by the voice of the sounding of the trump of the angel of God’ [D&C 88:97–98]. These are the just, ‘whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all. These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood’ [D&C 76:68–69].

“Following this great event, and after the Lord and the righteous who are caught up to meet him have descended upon the earth, there will come to pass another resurrection. This may be considered as a part of the first, although it comes later. In this resurrection will come forth those of the terrestrial order, who were not worthy to be caught up to meet him, but who are worthy to come forth to enjoy the millennial reign. . . .

“All liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers and all who love and make a lie, shall not receive the resurrection at this time, but for a thousand years shall be thrust down into hell where they shall suffer the wrath of God until they pay the price of their sinning, if it is possible, by the things which they shall suffer.

“These are the ‘spirits of men who are to be judged, and are found under condemnation; And these are the rest of the dead; and they live not again until the thousand years are ended, neither again, until the end of the earth’ [D&C 88:100–101]” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:295–97).

Alma 40:23–25. The Resurrection

Concerning our immortal identity and the perfection of body brought about by the resurrection, President Joseph F. Smith said:

“What a glorious thought it is . . . that those from whom we have to part here, we will meet again and see as they are. We will meet the same identical being that we associated with here in the flesh—not some other soul, some other being, or the same being in some other form, but the same identity and the same form and likeness, the same person we knew and were associated with in our mortal existence, even to the wounds in the flesh. Not that a person will always be marred by scars, wounds, deformities, defects or

infirmities, for these will be removed in their course, in their proper time, according to the merciful providence of God. Deformity will be removed; defects will be eliminated, and men and women shall attain to the perfection of their spirits, to the perfection that God designed in the beginning. It is his purpose that men and women, his children, born to become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, shall be made perfect, physically as well as spiritually, through obedience to the law by which he has provided the means that perfection shall come to all his children. . . .

“. . . What else would satisfy us? What else would satisfy the desire of the immortal soul? Would we be satisfied to be imperfect? Would we be satisfied to be decrepit? Would we be satisfied to remain forever and ever in the form of infirmity incident to age? No! . . . From the day of the resurrection, the body will develop until it reaches the full measure of the stature of its spirit, whether it be male or female” (*Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 23–24).

Alma 40:26. The Second Death

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

“Eventually, all are redeemed from spiritual death except those who have ‘sinned unto death’ (D. & C. 64:7), that is, those who are destined to be sons of perdition. John teaches this by saying that after death and hell have delivered up the dead which are in them, then death and hell shall be ‘cast into the lake of fire. This is the *second death*.’ (Rev. 20:12–15.) And thus the Lord said in our day that the sons of perdition are ‘the only ones on whom the *second death* shall have any power’ (D. & C. 76:37), meaning any power *after* the resurrection” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 758).

Alma 41:10. “Showdown Between Good and Evil”

President Ezra Taft Benson said:

“We live in an age when, as the Lord foretold, men’s hearts are failing them, not only physically but in spirit. (See D&C 45:26.) Many are giving up heart for the battle of life. Suicide ranks as a major cause of the deaths to college students. As the showdown between good and evil approaches with its accompanying trials and tribulations, Satan is increasingly striving to overcome the Saints with despair, discouragement, despondency, and depression. . . .

“. . . In the Book of Mormon we read that ‘despair cometh because of iniquity.’ (Moro. 10:22.) ‘When I do good I feel good,’ said Abraham Lincoln, ‘and

when I do bad I feel bad.’ Sin pulls a man down into despondency and despair. While a man may take some temporary pleasure in sin, the end result is unhappiness. ‘Wickedness never was happiness.’ (Al. 41:10.) Sin creates disharmony with God and is depressing to the spirit. Therefore, a man would do well to examine himself to see that he is in harmony with all of God’s laws. Every law kept brings a particular blessing. Every law broken brings a particular blight. Those who are heavy laden with despair should come unto the Lord, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. (See Matt. 11:28–30.)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, pp. 90–91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, pp. 65–66).

Alma 42:9–28. The Laws of Justice and Mercy

Alma 42 contains some important teachings on the justice and mercy of God. Justice can be simply defined as God’s unalterable decree that sin and righteousness bring their own consequences. One aspect of God’s nature is perfect justice. He “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (D&C 1:31). In spite of his perfect love, God cannot ignore man’s sinful state. Justice requires a punishment for every violation to God’s law. However, God is not only just; he is also merciful.

Alma pointed out that if it were not for the plan of redemption, justice would, at death, consign men’s souls to a state of eternal misery (see Alma 42:11, 2 Nephi 9:8–9). It was essential that mankind be reclaimed from this spiritual death. So, God, in his infinite mercy, provided a plan of redemption in perfect accord with the law of justice. The Atonement makes it possible for all individuals to repent in this probationary state and be freed from punishment without destroying the works of justice. The conditions for having this merciful payment applied are faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end (see 2 Nephi 31:10–16).

The beauty of the plan of redemption is that it meets the demands of justice through the infinite mercy of a loving Heavenly Father. The plan of redemption makes it possible for God to be merciful and, at the same time, just (see Alma 42:1). If this were not so, “God would cease to be God” (v. 25). To reject God’s act of love is to reject God and expose oneself to “the whole law of the demands of justice” (Alma 34:16). For such persons it is as though there had been no redemption made, and

they are then required to suffer for their own sins (see D&C 19:15–18).

Points to Ponder

- How is Alma a good example of a parent following the Lord’s instructions in Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28? What influence did Alma’s teachings have on his son Corianton? (see Alma 43:1, 49:30).
- What leads to sin? How can a person avoid sin? (see Alma 39).
- List Alma’s teachings about the resurrection of all men (see Alma 40:1–5, 16–23; 42:23).
- Using Alma 42 as a guide, explain the principles of justice and mercy.

Chapter 32

Alma 43–51

Introduction

Righteous people must sometimes fight to protect their God-given rights. During a crucial time in Nephite history the Lord raised up Moroni and other great defenders to lead the Nephites in defending their liberties.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 43:1–8. Background to the Wars

The following points summarize the background of this war period:

1. The Zoramites dissented from the Nephites (see Alma 31:8–10).
2. The Nephites feared the dissenters would join with the Lamanites; Alma endeavored to preach the word of God to the Zoramites to keep this from happening (see vv. 4–5).
3. The Zoramites who believed in Alma’s preaching were cast out by the unbelieving Zoramites, who feared the loss of their wealth and power if conversion were widespread (see Alma 35:3–6).
4. The people of Ammon, also known as the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, provided for the welfare of the cast out Zoramites (see v. 9).
5. The apostate Zoramites threatened the people of Ammon, but the people of Ammon continued to help the rejected Zoramites (see vv. 8–9).
6. The apostate Zoramites mixed with the Lamanites and stirred them up to war against the people of Ammon (see vv. 10–11).
7. The people of Ammon and the converted Zoramites were evacuated, and the Nephite armies prepared for war (see v. 13).
8. Alma was concerned about the wickedness among his people (see v. 15).
9. Alma sent his sons, including a repentant Corianton (see Alma 49:30), among the Nephites to call them to repentance (see Alma 43:1–2).
10. The apostate Zoramites became Lamanites (see v. 4).
11. The Lamanites moved into the land of the Zoramites in preparation for an attack upon the Nephites (see v. 5).

Alma 43:9–15. “Obligated to Contend”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

“Self-defense is as justifiable where war is concerned as where one man seeks to take the life of another. . . . Righteous men are entitled, expected, and obligated to defend themselves; they must engage in battle when there is no other way to preserve their rights and freedoms and to protect their families, homes, land, and the truths of salvation which they have espoused” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 826).

Alma 44. Support for the Faithful

According to Moroni, why were the Nephites able to prevail over the Lamanites? Why didn’t Zerahemnah accept Moroni’s reasoning? What finally compelled Zerahemnah’s acceptance?

Alma 45:1–17. Alma’s Prophecy

What did Alma prophesy to his son Helaman? (see Alma 45:10–17). Why would the prophecy come to pass? (see vv. 12–14). Explain “the cursing and the blessing” spoken of in verse 16 (compare Ether 2:8–12).

Alma 46:10–22. The Title of Liberty

Elder Ezra Taft Benson said:

“Human liberty is the mainspring of human progress.

“The one great revolution in the world is the revolution for human liberty. This was the paramount issue in the great council in heaven before this earth life. It has been the issue throughout the ages. It is the issue today. . . .

“In that sacred volume of scripture, the Book of Mormon, we note the great and prolonged struggle for liberty. We also note the complacency of the people and their frequent willingness to give up their liberty for the promises of a would-be provider.

“The record reveals that a man ‘of cunning device . . . and . . . many flattering words,’ . . . sought . . . ‘to destroy the foundation of liberty which God had granted unto them. . . .’ (Alma 46:10.)

“Then Moroni, the chief commander of the armies, dramatically ‘. . . rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole.

“‘. . . (and he called it the title of liberty) and he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, . . .’ (See *ibid.*, 46:12–13.)

“This great general, Moroni, like the prophets whose words are recorded in the Book of Mormon, spoke of the Americas as a chosen land—the land of liberty. He led the people in battle who were willing to fight to ‘maintain their liberty.’

“And the record states: ‘. . . that he caused the title of liberty to be hoisted upon every tower which was in all the land, . . . and thus Moroni planted the standard of liberty among the Nephites.’ (*Ibid.*, 46:36.) . . .

“While this incident occurred some seventy years B.C., the struggle went on through one thousand years covered by this sacred Book of Mormon record. In fact, the struggle for liberty is a continuing one—it is with us in a very real sense today right here on this choice land of the Americas” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1962, pp. 14–15).

Alma 46:23–27. Joseph’s Coat of Many Colors

“With the translation of the Book of Mormon many of the descendants of Joseph were made known. Who could have made that great discovery without a revelation from the Lord? . . .

“We are told that there was a prophecy in the destruction of the coat of many colors worn by Joseph. Part of it was preserved, and Jacob, before his death, prophesied that as a remnant of the coat was preserved so should a remnant of Joseph’s posterity be preserved. ‘And he said, Even as this remnant of garment of my son’s hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment.’—Alma 46:24.

“That remnant now found among the Lamanites shall eventually partake of the blessings of the Gospel.

They shall unite with the remnant which is being gathered from among the nations and they shall be blessed of the Lord forever” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, p. 121).

Alma 46:28–41. Protecting the Cause of Freedom

The chief difference between Amalickiah and Moroni is that one man wanted to “destroy the foundation of liberty which God had granted” to the Nephites and the other wanted to preserve it (Alma 46:10). For those of Amalickiah’s followers who would not capitulate to the cause of freedom, Moroni decreed a severe penalty—death.

Regarding Moroni’s actions, Hugh Nibley wrote: “Stirring people up to anger is the specialty of the great trouble-makers in the Book of Mormon, who find it the surest road to personal prominence and power. To check Amalickiah’s move, ‘Moroni thought it was expedient’ to force a peace on the dissenters with all possible haste. Moving with his usual dispatch, he intercepted them before they got out of the country, made them surrender to him, and required them to take an oath, ‘a covenant to keep the peace’ and not fight against their own government. (Alma 46:35.) No citizen could give less, and those who refused were knowingly accepting the status of combatants, and could expect to be treated as such. At the time Moroni was acting with special military powers given him ‘by the chief judges and the voice of the people,’ (Alma 46:34) and accordingly put to death as an enemy in arms those who refused to lay down their arms; but these were only a few (v. 35); instead of a blanket order for the execution of all Amalickiahites as traitors, in the modern fashion, Moroni merely exacted from them a promise to support the government during a dire national emergency” (*Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World*, pp. 340–41).

Seldom during a war have prisoners been given the chance to swear allegiance to the government of their captors and then be freed. Once again we see the importance these people placed on making and keeping oaths.

Alma 48:11–25. Moroni’s Greatness

The contrast between Moroni and men like Zerahemnah and Amalickiah is dramatic. Moroni had exhibited leadership qualities throughout his life and was appointed to lead the Nephite armies when he was only twenty-five. The following are some of the keys to Moroni’s greatness:

He sought for, obtained, and heeded the word of the Lord given through the living prophet (see Alma 43:23–26).

He was vitally concerned for the welfare of those who served under his command (see vv. 18–21, 48:7–10, 49:18–20, 50:1–4).

He used strategy to overcome his enemies (see Alma 43:27–35).

He was firm for the right, yet quick to forgive (see Alma 44:1–20).

He was patriotic in spirit and prayerful in attitude (see Alma 46:11–20).

He was a noble man, a man of God (see Alma 48:11–18).

Alma 48:14. “Even to the Shedding of Blood”

“The Church membership are citizens or subjects of sovereignties over which the Church has no control. The Lord Himself has told us to ‘befriend that law which is the constitutional law of the land’: [D&C 98:4–7.]

“ . . . When, therefore, constitutional law, obedient to these principles, calls the manhood of the Church into the armed service of any country to which they owe allegiance, their highest civic duty requires that they meet that call. If, harkening to that call and obeying those in command over them, they shall take the lives of those who fight against them, that will not make of them murderers, nor subject them to the penalty that God has prescribed for those who kill. . . . For it would be a cruel God that would punish His children as moral sinners for acts done by them as the innocent instrumentalities of a sovereign whom He had told them to obey and whose will they were powerless to resist” (Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1942, pp. 94–95).

Alma 49–50. Insight and Understanding for Us Today

In Alma 49–50 Mormon continued his account of the Nephite-Lamanite war. Considering the effort required to engrave the plates and the limited writing space available, we should try to understand what Mormon saw in this period of Nephite history that he thought would be significant for us today. As you read these chapters watch for the insights and understandings that were meant to bless our lives (for an example see Alma 50:18–23).

Alma 51. The King-men

Righteous kings are an ideal, but unrighteous kings create problems for their people. As Mosiah said, “For behold, how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction!” (Mosiah 29:17). The king-men who desired Amalickiah as king were inviting disaster. Note in Alma 51:8 who supported the idea of overthrowing the republic in favor of a monarchy and why.

Points to Ponder

- Nearly one-third of the Book of Mormon is devoted to recording the wars between the Lamanites and the Nephites. Why do you think there are so many chapters on war in the Book of Mormon?
- In these war chapters, how did Mormon show us Jesus Christ?
- Compare the kind of men the Nephites and the Lamanites supported as their leaders? What lessons are found in this comparison for us?

Chapter 33

Alma 52–58

Introduction

The story of Helaman and the two thousand stripling sons of the people of Ammon, later joined by sixty more of their brethren, is one of the most inspiring stories in sacred literature.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 52–53. “They That Take the Sword”

The Savior said, “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matthew 26:52). War is always the result of sin on someone’s part.

The devil laughs when he sees the destruction of the Lord’s people, but the Lord weeps (see Moses 7:24–28, 32–33). Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and those who follow him are emissaries of peace, even during war.

Alma 52:6. Preparing for War

A nation must prepare to defend itself, but it can go too far in its preparations. The First Presidency issued this warning:

“We repeat our warnings against the terrifying arms race in which the nations of the earth are presently engaged. We deplore in particular the building of vast arsenals of nuclear weaponry. We are advised that there is already enough such weaponry to destroy in large measure our civilization, with consequent suffering and misery of incalculable extent” (Spencer W. Kimball, N. Eldon Tanner, Marion G. Romney, “First Presidency Statement on Basing of MX Missile,” *Ensign*, June 1981, p. 76).

Alma 53:8. “The West Sea, South”

“When the Nephites first landed in the promised land, they gave names to some of the seas and lands around them. At that time the sea to the west of their landing place was evidently called the ‘west sea.’ Later, Nephi left this land, took his followers, and went northward where they settled in the land of Nephi. The descendants of Nephi and his group lived there for several hundred years. Then Mosiah, under the inspiration of the Lord, led a group of Nephites even farther north to the land of Zarahemla. The major group of the Nephites is now located in the land of Zarahemla, far north of the original landing place.

Thus, the original ‘west sea’ is actually far to the south of where they are now living, and they refer to ‘the west sea, south.’ (Alma 53:8.)” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 236–37).

Alma 53:10–23. The Stripling Warriors

The young Ammonite warriors exemplified the type of manhood which all of God’s sons should emulate. These warriors were committed to the defense of their country and the preservation of liberty (see Alma 53:17). They were men of courage, truth, and righteousness (see vv. 20–21). They were fearless, selfless, and men of great faith (see Alma 56:45–48, 56). God rewarded their faith with amazing protection (see Alma 57:25–26).

Note how clearly those young men fit the following admonition and prophetic promise from the First Presidency of the Church in modern times: “To our young men who go into service, no matter whom they serve or where, we say live clean, keep the commandments of the Lord, pray to Him constantly to preserve you in truth and righteousness, live as you pray, and then whatever betides you the Lord will be with you and nothing will happen to you that will not be to the honor and glory of God and to your salvation and exaltation. There will come into your hearts from the living of the pure life you pray for, a joy that will pass your powers of expression or understanding. The Lord will be always near you; He will comfort you; you will feel His presence in the hour of your greatest tribulation; He will guard and protect you to the full extent that accords with His all-wise purpose. Then, when the conflict is over and you return to your homes, having lived the righteous life, how great will be your happiness—whether you be of the victors or of the vanquished—that you have lived as the Lord commanded. You will return so disciplined in righteousness that thereafter all Satan’s wiles and stratagems will leave you untouched. Your faith and testimony will be strong beyond breaking. You will be looked up to and revered as having passed through the fiery furnace of trial and temptation and come forth unharmed. Your brethren will look to you for counsel, support, and guidance. You will be the anchors to which thereafter the youth of Zion will moor their faith in man” (Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr.,

David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1942, p. 96).

Alma 53:17. “Allegiance to Their Sovereign”

The First Presidency of the Church stated: “Members must give allegiance to their sovereign and render it loyal service when called thereto” (Grant, Clark, McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1942, p. 92). This allegiance includes military service. The attitude of Latter-day Saints should be “fully to render that loyalty to that country and to free institutions which the loftiest patriotism calls for” (Grant, Clark, McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1942, p. 93).

Alma 54. Two Letters

A fascinating aspect of Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi was the inclusion of letters, or epistles, apparently word for word (see Alma 54, 56–58, 60–61). Letters can clearly show the personality of the writer. Compare Moroni’s letter in Alma 54:6–14 with Ammoron’s in verses 16–24.

Alma 58. The Need for a Strong Defense

The Book of Mormon teaches that a people must prepare to defend themselves if they are to remain free, for war may sometimes be required to defend that freedom. It also teaches that mere physical defenses and armaments are not sufficient preparation. Elder John A. Widtsoe said:

“Preparedness is today on every tongue. There is danger ahead, and defenses must be set up. Preparedness is not a new word to Latter-day Saints. For one hundred and ten years our voice has been one of warning to prepare against the commotion and calamities of the last days. We have taught and continue to teach that full preparedness and complete defense against the devastation by evil is the acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ we may look for the peace of Eden, but not before.

“Our land is setting up defenses of powder and steel. That is well enough. But there are intangible defenses more powerful which direct the use of material defenses. These must be fostered, if our preparedness shall be adequate” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1940, pp. 61–62).

Points to Ponder

- Read the following scriptures and develop a plan for achieving spiritual power: Alma 53:17–21, 56:47, 57:21, 58:40.
- What can you do now to honor, sustain, and defend your country?

Chapter 34

Alma 59–63

Introduction

After clearing up a misunderstanding, Moroni, the chief captain of the Nephite armies, and Pahoran, the chief judge and governor over the Nephites, unitedly strove to preserve the rights and liberty of their people.

Notes and Commentary

Alma 59:13. Moroni's Love of Liberty

Mormon's inclusion of Moroni's misunderstanding of what was happening within the Nephite government helps to show the greatness of Moroni's love of liberty, as well as Pahoran's forgiving and gentle spirit.

Alma 60:10–14. The Slaying of the Righteous

Moroni wrote that the Lord permits the righteous to be slain so that "his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked" (Alma 60:13). He continued, "Therefore, ye need not suppose that the righteous are lost because they are slain; but behold, they do enter into the rest of the Lord their God" (v. 13).

Soon after the beginning of World War II the First Presidency of the Church stated: "In this terrible war now waging, thousands of our righteous young men in all parts of the world and in many countries are subject to a call into the military service of their own countries. Some of these, so serving, have already been called back to their heavenly home; others will almost surely be called to follow. But 'behold,' as Moroni said, the righteous of them who serve and are slain 'do enter into the rest of the Lord their God,' [Alma 60:13] and of them the Lord has said 'those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them.' (D. & C. 42:46) Their salvation and exaltation in the world to come will be secure. That in their work of destruction they will be striking at their brethren will not be held against them. That sin, as Moroni of old said, is to the condemnation of those who 'sit in their places of power in a state of thoughtless stupor,' those rulers in the world who in a frenzy of hate and lust for unrighteous power and dominion over their fellow men, have put into motion eternal forces they do not comprehend and cannot control. God, in His own due time, will pass sentence upon them" (Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben

Clark, Jr., David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1942, pp. 95–96).

A few months later Elder Harold B. Lee said: "It is my conviction that the present devastating scourge of war in which hundreds of thousands are being slain, many of whom are no more responsible for the causes of the war than are our own boys, is making necessary an increase of missionary activity in the spirit world and that many of our boys who bear the Holy Priesthood and are worthy to do so will be called to that missionary service after they have departed this life" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, p. 73).

Alma 61:1–14. Pahoran's Reply to Moroni

Pahoran's reply to Moroni is a classic in scriptural literature. Pahoran knew that Moroni did not know the true state of affairs within the government. Moroni was fighting on the battlefield and did not have time to investigate the situation as one would do ordinarily. Moreover, Pahoran knew that Moroni was a true servant of God and of the people, and that his anger was solely in the interest of liberty. As Moroni wrote in closing his epistle: "I seek not for power, but to pull it down. I seek not for honor of the world, but for the glory of my God, and the freedom and welfare of my country" (Alma 60:36).

Pahoran felt the same sentiments as Moroni, and so understood the motivation behind his censure. Hence, after explaining to Moroni the cause of the difficulty at home, Pahoran wrote: "Therefore, my beloved brother, Moroni, let us resist evil, and whatsoever evil we cannot resist with our words, yea, such as rebellions and dissensions, let us resist them with our swords, that we may retain our freedom, that we may rejoice in the great privilege of our church, and in the cause of our Redeemer and our God" (Alma 61:14).

After receiving Pahoran's letter and request to help oust the king-men from Zarahemla, Moroni took a small part of his army to the governor's aid. Together they reestablished liberty as a ruling principle among their countrymen.

Through their letters we have the example of two great patriots joined together in righteousness and commitment to true principles to serve their nation. This lesson in patriotism is one of the finest in all

scripture and demonstrates what can be accomplished by a united people with freedom as their purpose and the Lord as their God. Its message is most timely in an age in which many are seeking to undermine, if not violently overthrow, established governments in which God-given liberties are still protected.

Alma 61:15–21. The Commander-in-chief

In a democracy, does the ultimate military authority reside with the military or with the elected representatives of the people? Who was the supreme commander of the Nephite armies: Moroni or Pahoran?

Alma 2:16 shows that the military leaders were called the chief judge and governor’s captains and chief captains, and states that Alma, as “the chief judge and the governor of the people of Nephi,” led “*his* armies, against the Amlicites to battle” (emphasis added). Moroni had been “appointed to be the chief captain over the Nephites,” and “the chief captain took the command of all the armies of the Nephites” (Alma 43:16). Moroni would have been appointed to his post under the authority of the chief judge, who in turn received his authority by election from the people. With his right as commander-in-chief of the armies, Pahoran issued orders to Moroni (see Alma 61:15–18, 21).

Alma 62:3–14. Treason

Treason is a serious offense. Pachus and his kingmen were committed to the overthrow of Nephite freedom. They insisted on trying to destroy the very thing Moroni’s soldiers were fighting for and dying to preserve. This neither Moroni nor Pahoran could condone in the slightest. It was difficult enough to have to fight aggression from outside their country, but to have to battle foes within, as well, was unthinkable. Following their capture, the evil men of Pachus were executed if they would not take up arms to defend their country.

Alma 63:4–10. Journey to the Land Northward

Speaking of Hagoth and his party, President Spencer W. Kimball said: “President Joseph F. Smith, the president of the Church reported, ‘You brethren and sisters from New Zealand, I want you to know that you are from the people of Hagoth.’ For New Zealand Saints, that was that. A prophet of the Lord had spoken” (in New Zealand Area Conference Report, 20–22 Feb. 1976, p. 3).

Points to Ponder

- Why would Mormon include Moroni’s letter to Pahoran in his record? (see Alma 60).
- Note the correlation between the freedom of a nation and the proper function of the Church (see Alma 62:39–41, 45–51).

Chapter 35

Helaman 1–4

Introduction

God continually offers the blessings of the gospel to all people (see Helaman 3:28), but they must accept it of their own free will. When people accept the gospel, God is able to bless them; but when they reject it, he cannot.

Notes and Commentary

Helaman 1. Contention for the Judgment Seat

The contention of the sons of Pahoran for the judgment seat is a good example of what can happen in a democracy when men refuse to accept the will of the people. The contention for the judgment seat opened the way for much evil and eventually resulted in the downfall of the Nephite nation.

Note the following points found in Helaman 1:

Capital punishment was the accepted punishment for treason (see v. 8).

Those who sought to circumvent the law for personal power were willing to resort to murder to get their way (see v. 9).

The contention over the judgment seat gave the attacking Lamanites an advantage against the Nephites (see vv. 18–20).

Because the Lamanites first invaded the weaker center of the Nephite lands, Moronihah and his troops were able to surround them and compel them to surrender (see v. 31).

As his father, Moroni, had done earlier, Moronihah “caused that the Lamanites who had been taken prisoners should depart out of the land in peace” (v. 33).

Helaman 3:1–8. The Migration Northward

It is not known how early the northward migration of the Nephites began. It could have been as early as the migration mentioned in Helaman 3:8. However, that could have been a limited migration, and the further spread northward could have happened much later.

Helaman 3:17–32. When Men Obey the Lord

Contention diminished among the Nephites long enough during the period when Helaman (son of Helaman) was chief judge that spiritual and temporal prosperity increased substantially. The result, said Mormon, was “continual rejoicing” (Helaman 3:31) and “peace and exceeding great joy” (v. 32).

Mormon saw three great lessons in this increase of prosperity:

1. The Lord is merciful to all who, in sincerity, call on his holy name (see v. 27).
2. The gate of heaven is open to all who believe in Jesus Christ (see v. 28).
3. The word of God has three effects:
 - a. It divides “asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil” (v. 29).
 - b. It leads “the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery” (v. 29).
 - c. It helps land the faithful “at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven” (v. 30).

Helaman 3:33–37. Principles of Sanctification

Sanctification is a process whereby fallen man is enabled to become pure, holy, and eventually free from sin. The scriptures indicate that the Holy Ghost is the factor in producing this vital change (see 2 Nephi 31:17, Alma 13:11–12, 3 Nephi 27:20, Moroni 6:4). Thus the Spirit can be called a sanctifier or cleanser.

How much the Spirit cleanses or purifies depends on the obedience of the person. According to Helaman 3:35, to receive the sanctifying power of the Spirit a person should fast and pray often, strengthen his humility, increase the firmness of his faith in Christ, and yield his heart to God.

Points to Ponder

- The Nephites had such great blessings poured out upon them that “even the high priests and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure” (Helaman 3:25). However, notice what happened to them just a few years later (see Helaman 4:13). What brought about this change?
- What were the objectives of the secret combinations? (see Helaman 2:8). Consider Mormon’s comments on the effect the secret combinations had upon the Nephite civilization (see vv. 12–14).
- Mormon mentions dissensions and contentions many times in Helaman 3–4. Why do you think he emphasized these things? How can dissension and contention enter a home or ward? What can be done to avoid them?

Chapter 36

Helaman 5–9

Introduction

The ministry of Nephi and his brother Lehi was one of the most powerful in all of Nephite history.

Notes and Commentary

Helaman 5:9–13. The Source of Salvation

When Zeezrom confronted Alma and Amulek in the city of Ammonihah (see Alma 11), he asked Amulek if the Son of God would save his people in their sins. Amulek replied that the Son of God would not. Zeezrom then sought to convince the people that Amulek had said that God would not save his people, but Amulek corrected Zeezrom and reminded him that what he had said was that God would not save people *in their sins*, because “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven” (v. 37). People must first repent of their sins.

Helaman referred to the incident with Zeezrom in his conversation with his sons. He first reminded them of King Benjamin’s teachings, saying, “Remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ” (Helaman 5:9). He then reminds them of Amulek’s teaching that Christ did not come to redeem men *in* their sins, but *from* their sins (see v. 10). Men who would be saved must build their foundation for eternal life on Jesus Christ alone.

Helaman 5:22–34. Miraculous Occurrences

The marvelous events described in Helaman 5:22–34 are similar to occurrences described elsewhere in the scriptures.

Nephi and Lehi were surrounded by fire which did not harm them (see v. 23). Compare this with the experience of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the fiery furnace (see Daniel 3:19–27), and the experience recorded concerning the little children at the time of Jesus’ visit to the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 17:24).

The walls of the prison shook on three separate occasions as if they might tumble down (see Helaman 5:27, 31, 33). Compare this to the time the walls of the prison in Ammonihah fell and killed all but Alma and Amulek (see Alma 14:27–28).

A voice was heard from heaven three separate times commanding the people to repent and to cease persecuting the servants of the Lord (see Helaman 5:29, 32–33). This is similar to the voice that was heard just prior to the Savior’s appearance among the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 9, 10:3–7).

A cloud of darkness overshadowed those who assembled near the prison, making it impossible for the Lamanites to flee “because of the fear which did come upon them” (Helaman 5:34). Compare this with the darkness at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion (see 3 Nephi 8:20–23).

Helaman 6. The Significance of the Secret Combinations

Helaman 6 and Ether 8 provide some of the most important insights into secret combinations, including how they worked, what motivated them, and how they came to power. Moroni prophetically warned his latter-day readers that secret combinations were the source of the destruction of both the Jaredite and Nephite societies (see Ether 8:18–21). Moroni then warned us in terms of utmost gravity of the dangers such secret combinations hold for our own day (see vv. 22–26). From this chapter and other places in the Book of Mormon we learn the following important characteristics of secret combinations:

1. The devil is the inspiration and source of all such organizations (see Helaman 6:26–30). Mormon clearly pointed to Satan as the grand conspirator, the real organizer of all such organizations.
2. Such organizations are viewed by the Lord as constituting a wickedness “above all the wickedness of the whole earth” (3 Nephi 9:9; see also Ether 8:18). While individuals may rob, steal, plunder, and murder, how much more wickedness occurs when men plunder and kill on a national or an international scale involving millions of lives?
3. Such organizations flourish and thrive when the “more part” (Helaman 6:21) of the people are wicked and seek to benefit from the spoils of such wickedness (see v. 38).
4. Secrecy is one of the basic operating tenets of such organizations (see vv. 22, 25–26).

5. Joined with the idea of secrecy is the idea of making covenants (see vv. 22, 25–26). An oath of loyalty to the organization is made which involves a vow to maintain the secret of the conspiracy. After the murder of the chief judge, Kishkumen “went unto those that sent him, and they all entered into a covenant, yea, swearing by their everlasting Maker, that they would tell no man” (Helaman 1:11). Helaman 6:21 refers to “their covenants and their oaths.” Moroni described this same covenant making among the Jaredites (see Ether 8:13–14). Ironically, the oaths were sometimes made in the name of God (see Helaman 1:11, Ether 8:14).
6. The objectives of such secret combinations are power or gain, or both (see Helaman 6:38, Ether 8:22, Moses 5:31–33). Since the government is a source of great power, it is not surprising that often the target of action is to take over the reins of government (see Helaman 1:1–4, 2:4–5, 3 Nephi 3:6, 6:30, 7:12, Ether 9:1–6, 13:18).
7. These organizations use immorality, money, and violence to achieve their ends (see Helaman 6:15, 17, Ether 8:10). Assassinating government leaders to bring their own people to power is a common tale found in the Book of Mormon.
8. The only way to lastingly curtail these organizations once they are established and begin to flourish is through conversion of the people to righteousness (see Helaman 6:37, 3 Nephi 5:4–6).

Helaman 7:1–9. A Tragic and Recurring Cycle

An ever-recurring theme of the Book of Mormon is a tragic cycle: When the people of God are righteous, they prosper. When they prosper, they become proud and forget God, the source of their blessings. When they become proud and forget the Lord, they fight, quarrel, make war, and commit all manner of wickedness. This wickedness in turn leads to a disintegration and destruction of nations. These calamities bring the people to repentance, they turn to the Lord in righteousness, and the cycle begins again.

The people of Nephi’s day were caught in this vicious circle to such an extent that the Gadianton robbers usurped almost complete control of the government. According to Nephi, the commandments of God were laid aside, and justice ceased to exist for a time. The righteous were persecuted “because of their righteousness,” while the guilty were usually permitted to escape “because of their money” (Helaman 7:5). All manner of wickedness set in. It was while Nephi

contemplated the people’s rapid return to such wickedness that he was led to lament aloud in his garden.

Helaman 8:1–18. The Brass Serpent

The reaction to Nephi’s words was divided. What did the judges say, and why? (see Helaman 8:1–6). What did others say, and why? (see vv. 7–9).

Nephi continued by giving his listeners a sermon based on Old Testament demonstrations of God’s power through his servant Moses. He then said: “If God gave unto this man such power, then why should ye dispute among yourselves, and say that he hath given unto me no power whereby I may know concerning the judgments that shall come upon you except ye repent?” (v. 12).

Nephi directed his listeners’ attention to the incident where Moses made a serpent out of brass, placed it on a pole, and urged as many as had faith to look thereon and be healed from the bites of poisonous snakes.

“According to the Bible, when the people of Israel were being bitten by serpents and some of the people were dying, the Lord commanded Moses to make a serpent ‘and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.’ (Numbers 21:8–9.) That is the end of the account in the Bible. However, the account in the Book of Mormon indicates that when Moses lifted up the brazen serpent he did ‘bear record that the Son of God should come. And as he lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so shall he be lifted up who should come. And as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal.’ (Helaman 8:14–15).

“The Savior also indicated that the ‘brazen serpent lifted up by Moses’ was a type (shadow, or example) of his own crucifixion when he said: ‘And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.’ (John 3:14–15.)” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 243–44).

Helaman 8:15. “Look to God and Live”

Elder Marion G. Romney spoke of the importance of following God’s will as given through his prophets:

“Now, from Adam to Noah and beyond, the gospel was taught by father to son. Later on it was revealed to Abraham. Moses received it anew following the long bondage of Israel in Egypt. Jesus, in the meridian of time, taught and demonstrated it. The Jaredites and the Nephites were likewise prophetically instructed.

“That men have not enjoyed peace, happiness, and continual progress is, therefore, not because God has failed to make known the way by which these blessings could be had. It is because men have refused to obey the revealed laws upon which these blessings are predicated.

“The burden of all the prophets, from Adam to our present prophet, has been to persuade men to look to God and live. Over and over again in every dispensation they have warned of calamities pending because of man’s corrupt and sinful ways.

“Cain’s curse was brought on by his own willful rejection of the counsel of God. The antediluvians brought on the flood in which they perished by rejecting Noah, who taught and pleaded with them for one hundred twenty years. The Jaredites pursued their rebellious course to their utter destruction in defiance of the teachings and warnings of their prophets. Following the same course, the Nephites suffered great destruction at the time of Christ’s crucifixion.

“All of this endless tragedy, carnage, and sorrow could have been avoided. All of these peoples could have existed in peace and prosperity had they been willing to look to God” (*Look to God and Live*, pp. 8–9).

Elder Romney also talked about our responsibility in serving God:

“For us as individuals the course is crystal clear. By precept and example we should do all that lies within our power to take the message of the gospel, the Lord’s solution to our problems, to the peoples of the earth and inspire them to look to him and live. For every individual in this world there is yet an option, and it is still open. But whatever others may do, let us not personally be diverted from our course. Let us ‘be not faithless, but believing’ (John 20:27).

“Let us so long as we live continue to ‘seek . . . the Lord to establish his righteousness’ (D&C 1:16). Let us prove worthy to live with him eternally in the

heavens. Let us not be deceived by the learning and sophistries and the wickedness of this world. Let us not forget that God lives, that we are his children, that his purpose is to bring us to immortality and eternal life. Let us always remember and keep in mind that all man has learned and accomplished, together with all that he will yet learn and accomplish in mortality, is as a drop in the ocean compared to the knowledge and works of God. Let us remember that in the light of God’s knowledge, and he knows all things, still his instruction to us—against that total knowledge—is that, above all else, the one thing of most importance to us is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

“Let us be constantly aware that we are living in the last gospel dispensation; that Satan has marshaled all his forces for war; that he is making his final premillennium struggle for our individual souls and for the souls of all men. Let us realize that the conflict we are now in will be accelerated to such intensity ‘that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety’ (D&C 45:68).

“Let us understand that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the literal kingdom of God in the earth; that neither defectors from within nor enemies from without can stay its progress. It is here to stay and to triumph. In the words of Moroni, ‘The eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled’ (Mormon 8:22)” (*Look to God and Live*, pp. 12–13).

Helaman 8:19–22. Zenos, Zenock, and Ezias

The prophet Zenos is mentioned twelve times in the Book of Mormon, Zenock five times, and Ezias once. According to Helaman 8:19–20 it would seem that these men lived somewhere between the time of Abraham (2200 B.C.) and Jeremiah (626–586 B.C.). Their writings appeared on the brass plates of Laban—the equivalent of, though more extensive than, our present-day Old Testament (up to 600 B.C.). As with all other true prophets of all dispensations, these men bore witness of Christ.

Helaman 8:23–28. “Wrath Against the Day of Judgment”

Nephi concluded his appeal for his people’s repentance by implying that in rejecting his words the people were just like those who had rejected the words of Lehi and Nephi in a former age. And then to cement his testimony firmly in their minds, Nephi prophesied

of the murder of the chief judge at the hands of the Gadianton band.

Points to Ponder

- Why did some Nephites vacillate between righteousness and wickedness while others remained firm?
- Why do you think the converted Lamanites never seemed to falter in their devotion to truth?
- How does Deuteronomy 18:22 apply to Nephi's experiences in Helaman 7–9?
- What were the differences between the responses of the Nephites and the Lamanites to the Gadianton robbers? (see Helaman 6:37–40).

Chapter 37

Helaman 10–12

Introduction

“I will bless thee forever” (Helaman 10:5). What a significant promise Nephi received from the Lord in these words! Nephi’s fellowmen could have enjoyed this same promise if they had been as consistent in following the teachings of the Savior. The same is true today; our consistency in living the gospel determines whether we will win or lose such a prized blessing.

Notes and Commentary

Helaman 10:1–10. The Sealing Power

Because of Nephi’s righteousness he was given power to bind or loose on earth and have the same bound or loosed in heaven (see Helaman 10:7). This is the same power the Savior gave to Peter, James, and John (see Matthew 16:19) and restored through Joseph Smith (see D&C 128:8–10, 132:46). The same keys to this power are held today by the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—God’s living prophet on the earth.

Nephi was one of the mightiest prophets to live on the earth. The Lord had absolute confidence in him, knowing that he would not use the power given to him in any way contrary to the will of the Lord.

Helaman 12. A Prophet’s Insight

After Nephi saw that the preaching of the gospel failed to bring the people to repentance, he asked the Lord to send a famine in the land to bring the people to their knees, and it was done according to his words (see Helaman 11:4–6). As people began to die by the thousands, the wicked “began to remember the Lord their God; and they began to remember the words of Nephi” (v. 7). The people pleaded with their chief judges to acknowledge Nephi’s authority and to ask him to turn the famine aside. Nephi did so, and the famine abated (see vv. 8–16).

For some seven or eight years the people served the Lord, but it was not long until they were once again engrossed in doing evil. At this point Mormon paused in the historical narrative to insert one of his most powerful prophetic insights into the nature of man and history.

It is important for students of the Book of Mormon to remember that Mormon’s work is an abridgment from numerous records he had at his disposal. Mormon was exceedingly selective in what he gave us, as is evidenced by the statement that he did not record “a hundredth part” of all he had access to (see Helaman 3:14).

It appears that Mormon selected certain materials because of the particular lessons they conveyed. Lest we miss the impact of the lesson conveyed in the preceding chapters, Mormon drew our attention to it with great care in Helaman 12 by means of phrases such as “thus we see” and “thus we can behold.” Note particularly verses 1–3. Clearly Mormon intended that we should not miss his message. Helaman 12 contains one of the greatest summaries of a basic human tendency found anywhere in the scriptures (see also Mosiah 11:24, Judges 10:13–14, Isaiah 1:15).

Helaman 12:3. “Chasten . . . With Many Afflictions”

Elder Neal A. Maxwell stated:

“The Lord has made no secret of the fact that He intends to try the faith and the patience of His Saints. (See Mosiah 23:21.) We mortals are so quick to forget the Lord: ‘And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions . . . they will not remember him’ (Helaman 12:3).

“However, the Lord knows our bearing capacity, both as to coping and to comprehending, and He will not give us more to bear than we can manage at the moment, though to us it may seem otherwise. (See D&C 50:40; 78:18.) Just as no temptations will come to us from which we cannot escape or which we cannot bear, we will not be given more trials than we can sustain. (See 1 Corinthians 10:13.) . . .

“President Brigham Young said of a geographical destination, ‘This is the place.’ Of God’s plan of salvation, with its developmental destination, it can be said, ‘This is the process!’

“President Young, who knew something about trial and tribulation but also of man’s high destiny, said that the Lord lets us pass through these experiences that we might become true friends of God. By developing our individual capacities, wisely

exercising our agency, and trusting God—including when we feel forsaken and alone—then we can, said President Young, learn to be ‘righteous in the dark.’ (Secretary’s Journal, 28 Jan. 1857.) The gospel glow we see radiating from some—amid dark difficulties—comes from illuminated individuals who are ‘of good cheer’!

“To be cheerful when others are in despair, to keep the faith when others falter, to be true even when we feel forsaken—all of these are deeply desired outcomes during the deliberate, divine tutorials which God gives to us—because He loves us. (See Mosiah 3:19.) These learning experiences must not be misread as divine indifference. Instead, such tutorials are a part of the divine unfolding” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, p. 97; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, p. 67).

Points to Ponder

- Have you ever wondered what sets prophets of God apart from other men? Read and ponder Helaman 10:4, 7, 12; 11:18.
- President Spencer W. Kimball stated: “The Lord uses the weather sometimes to discipline his people for the violation of his laws” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, p. 4; or *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 4). How did this principle come into focus in Nephi’s day? (see Helaman 11).

Chapter 38

Helaman 13–16

Introduction

Many of the Nephites of Zarahemla rejected Samuel the Lamanite prophet. Little did they realize that in about thirty-eight years many of them would cry, “O that we had repented . . . and had not . . . stoned the prophets, and cast them out” (3 Nephi 8:25).

Notes and Commentary

Helaman 13:11–16. Spared because of a Few Righteous People

There have been many times when the wicked were spared from terrible destructions and judgments because God considers the righteous, even though they may be few. The wicked people of Zarahemla had the righteous people to thank for their preservation from destruction, though, of course, they did not know it. In a few years Zarahemla would lose this silent and unappreciated protection, and Samuel’s words would be fulfilled (see 3 Nephi 9:3). Even Sodom and Gomorrah would have been spared for the sake of ten people who lived righteous lives (see Genesis 18:23–33).

How we live does make a difference. The personal righteousness of a few can become a great blessing to others.

Helaman 13:23–29. Following the Living Prophet

President Harold B. Lee said:

“When the Church was first organized, in fact, the day on which it was organized, the Lord was speaking to the Church. He didn’t mean just the six members that were then the constituted number of the Church: he was speaking about the President of the Church, who was the Prophet Joseph Smith at that time. And this is what he said: [D&C 21:4–6.]

“We have some tight places to go before the Lord is through with this church and the world in this dispensation, which is the last dispensation, which shall usher in the coming of the Lord. The gospel was restored to prepare a people ready to receive him. The power of Satan will increase; we see it in evidence on every hand. There will be inroads within the Church. There will be, as President Tanner has said,

‘Hypocrites, those professing, but secretly are full of dead men’s bones.’ We will see those who profess membership but secretly are plotting and trying to lead people not to follow the leadership that the Lord has set up to preside in this church.

“Now the only safety we have as members of this church is to do exactly what the Lord said to the Church in that day when the Church was organized. We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet, ‘as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; . . . as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.’ (D&C 21:4–5.) There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory.’ (D&C 21:6.)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, p. 152).

Helaman 14. Samuel’s Prophecy

One of the most specific prophecies in scripture is the one by Samuel concerning the birth and death of Jesus Christ. The following chart outlines this prophecy and the recorded fulfillment of each specific event:

The Birth of Jesus Christ	The Fulfillment
1. Christ to be born in five years (v. 2)	3 Nephi 1:13
2. No darkness for a day, a night, and a day (vv. 3–4)	3 Nephi 1:15
3. A new star to arise (v. 5)	3 Nephi 1:21
4. Other signs	
a. Many signs and wonders in heaven (v. 6)	3 Nephi 2:1

- b. People to fall to the earth (v. 7) 3 Nephi 1:16–17

The Death of the Lord

The Fulfillment

- 1. Sun to be darkened, moon and stars not to give light for three days (vv. 20, 27) 3 Nephi 8:19–23
- 2. Signs of the earth
 - a. Thunderings and lightnings for many hours (v. 21) 3 Nephi 8:6–7
 - b. Earth to shake and tremble and be broken up (vv. 21–22) 3 Nephi 8:12, 17–18
 - c. Tempests, mountains to be laid low, valleys raised (v. 23) 3 Nephi 8:5–6
 - d. Highways to be broken up, cities to become desolate (v. 24) 3 Nephi 8:8–11, 13
- 3. Many graves to be opened and people resurrected who shall appear unto many (v. 25) 3 Nephi 23:9–14

Helaman 14:16. “More Terrible Death than That of the Body”

Concerning spiritual death, President Joseph F. Smith said:

“I want to speak a word or two in relation to another death, which is a more terrible death than that of the body. When Adam, our first parent, partook of the forbidden fruit, transgressed the law of God, and became subject unto Satan, he was banished from the presence of God and was thrust out into outer spiritual darkness. This was the first death. Yet living, he was dead—dead to God, dead to light and truth, dead spiritually; cast out from the presence of God; communication between the Father and the son cut off. He was as absolutely thrust out from the presence of God as was Satan and the hosts that followed him. That was spiritual death. But the Lord said that He would not suffer Adam nor his posterity to come to the

temporal death until they should have the means by which they might be redeemed from the first death, which is spiritual. Therefore angels were sent unto Adam, who taught him the Gospel and revealed to him the principle by which he could be redeemed from the first death, and be brought back from banishment and outer darkness into the marvelous light of the Gospel. He was taught faith, repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, in the name of Jesus Christ, who should come in the meridian of time and take away the sin of the world, and was thus given a chance to be redeemed from the spiritual death before he should die the temporal death. Now, all the world today, I am sorry to say, with the exception of a handful of people who have obeyed the new and everlasting covenant, are suffering this spiritual death. They are cast out from the presence of God. They are without God, without Gospel truth, and without the power of redemption; for they know not God nor His Gospel. In order that they may be redeemed and saved from the spiritual death which has spread over the world like a pall, they must repent of their sins, and be baptized by one having authority, for the remission of their sins, that they may be born of God. That is why we want these young men to go out into the world to preach the Gospel. While they themselves understand but little perhaps, the germ of life is in them” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1899, p. 72).

Helaman 14:18. “Cast Into the Fire”

“This fire and brimstone, we are informed, is a representation of the torment which shall be suffered by the wicked. It is not actual fire, but it is the torment of the mind; in other words, it is the punishment which the Savior speaks of as being the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched, which shall endure forever.

“Let us be thankful that there will be but few who partake of this dreadful punishment” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:224–25).

Helaman 15. “The Day of the Lamanite”

“The day of the Lamanite is here and the gospel brings opportunity. Millions farm the steep hillsides of Andean ranges and market their produce with llamas and burros. They must have the emancipating gospel. Millions in Ecuador, Chile, and Bolivia serve in menial labor, eking out bare subsistence from soil and toil. They must hear the compelling truths. Millions through North America are deprived, untrained, and achieving less than their potential. They must have the enlightening gospel. It will break their fetters, stir their

ambition, increase their vision, and open new worlds of opportunity to them. Their captivity will be at an end—the captivity of misconceptions, illiteracy, superstition, fear. ‘The clouds of error disappear before the rays of truth divine.’

“The brighter day has dawned. The scattering has been accomplished—the gathering is in process. May the Lord bless us all as we become nursing parents unto our Lamanite brethren and hasten the fulfillment of the great promises made to them” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 358).

Helaman 16:1–11. “On Being a Prophet”

“We find ourselves often quoting the words of the prophets, and, lest there be some doubt as to what a prophet is, we submit that it is one who, under the appointment and inspiration of the Lord God, speaks truth as the spirit moves him, regardless of what the world is thinking and regardless of what men would like to hear.

“And, therefore, a prophet is seldom popular, and the cost of being a prophet is always great, for he may be called upon to say those things which are not pleasing, . . . and he may find himself fighting against a tide of mass-misconception, and, as history records, be stoned, crucified, banished, ridiculed, shunned, or rejected. For the truth is not pleasing unto all men, and time has proved that majorities are not always right. . . .

“It is not important that a prophet should say those things with which you and I are in full accord. But it is important that you and I should bring ourselves into full accord with those things which a prophet speaks by virtue of his office and calling” (Richard L. Evans, “On Being a Prophet,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1939, p. 672).

Helaman 16:12–25. “The Cunning . . . Arts of the Evil One”

Note the kinds of rationalization the people fell into to explain away the definite signs and evidences they had seen. With his usual cunning way, Satan twisted the minds of the people away from the truth. We must remember that Satan’s purposes are always directly opposite of those of God. Elder Marion G. Romney said:

“Satan is evil: totally and always. He ever seeks to defeat the gospel plan and ‘destroy the souls of men.’ (D&C 10:27.) . . .

“Satan is irrevocably committed to countering and overcoming the influence of the Spirit of Christ upon men” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 24; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 36).

Mormon said that Satan stirs people up “to do iniquity continually” (Helaman 16:22).

Points to Ponder

- The Prophet Joseph Smith was slain by a wicked mob motivated by the same force as those who shot arrows and cast stones at Samuel the Lamanite. If you had lived in either of their days, would you have accepted these prophets and perhaps even stood against the masses in their defense? How are you doing today in accepting a modern prophet? Are you listening to his counsel and doing your best to comply with his teachings? If you are, then most assuredly you would have accepted Samuel or Joseph Smith, because they were sent by the same Lord as our living prophet today.

If you are not following the prophet’s teachings and counsels very well, remember you are free to make that decision; but remember also that your choices bring eternal consequences. Your particular valiancy is measured more by your acceptance of today’s messengers of the Lord than by your reaction to those whose lives are now part of the past.

- Mark and make a scripture chain of Mosiah 7:27, Helaman 14:12, and Ether 3:14. What significant doctrine is contained in these references?

Chapter 39

3 Nephi 1–5

Introduction

Terrible wickedness had again spread throughout the land. Only by uniting were the righteous able to defeat the Gadianton robbers and restore peace.

Notes and Commentary

3 Nephi 1:4–8. The Primary Purpose of a Sign

“Gifts of the Spirit which the Lord bestows upon those who believe and obey the gospel of Christ are called *signs*. That is, their receipt stands as an evidence or sign of the presence of that faith which results from believing the truth. Signs are wonders and miracles; they always and invariably are manifest to and among the faithful saints.

“In every gospel dispensation, the saints have had this promise: *These signs shall follow them that believe*—in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover; And whosoever shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words, even unto the ends of the earth.” (Morm. 9:24–25. . . .)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 713).

What does the unbeliever’s attitude toward the failure of the promised sign to appear within the time specified show concerning unbelievers in general? What lesson should believers learn concerning signs and salvation? (see D&C 63:8–12).

Signs flow from faith and, indeed, are a product of it. They strengthen the faithful but produce faith only in the spiritually responsive. Their chief purpose, therefore, is not to produce faith but to reward it (see D&C 68:9–11). It is not uncommon in scripture to see the most marvelous signs and evidences of God’s power ignored or rationalized away by those without faith.

3 Nephi 2:5–8. The Nephite Calendar System

The Nephites used three systems of reckoning time:

The first method was to determine the number of years since father Lehi left Jerusalem. This system was

used from 600 B.C. to 92 B.C. (see Mosiah 29:44–47, Alma 1:1).

The second method used was to calculate the number of years from the beginning of the reign of the judges. This system was used for about one hundred years, from 92 B.C. to A.D. 9 (see 3 Nephi 2:5–7).

The last method used was “to reckon their time from [the] period when the sign was given, or from the coming of Christ” (3 Nephi 2:8). This system was used for the remainder of the Nephite record.

3 Nephi 2:9–19. Two Important Historical Events

In 3 Nephi 2:9–19 Mormon introduced two important historical items: (1) the converted followers of Jesus Christ had to unite together for their personal safety (see v. 12), and (2) the converted Lamanites had their curse removed from them (see v. 15).

3 Nephi 3:11–26. The Political and Military Leaders

In 3 Nephi 3:11–26 Mormon once again provided important historical insights that are of value to us today. He pointed out clearly that a key in the deliverance of the Nephites lay in the personal righteousness and courage of the political and military leaders (see vv. 12, 19).

Notice also that Gidgiddoni did not send his armies forth to attack the Gadiantons, but remained “in the center” (v. 21) of Nephite lands and fortified the land against attack. Gidgiddoni said, “We will not go against them, but we will wait till they shall come against us” (v. 21).

Notice how this agrees with the law of God as stated in our own day: “And again, this is the law that I gave unto mine ancients, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them” (D&C 98:33).

3 Nephi 5:1–12. A System of Justice

The Nephite approach to the captured Gadianton members was remarkable in light of many trends in our present society. Modern societies expend millions of dollars trying to psychoanalyze and rehabilitate criminals. Notice the twofold approach of the Nephites, who understood that the Gadianton

conspiracy posed a real threat to both the government and the Church. The Nephites preached the gospel to the robbers to see if they would be converted. If converted, the Gadiantons were freed—a remarkable bit of jurisprudence in and of itself! If the Gadiantons refused to repent, they “were condemned and punished according to the law” (3 Nephi 5:5).

Points to Ponder

- What were some of the things the righteous people did to withstand the onslaught of the Gadianton robbers?
- What did you learn about Mormon? What were his qualifications for the inspired work he did on the Nephite records? (see 3 Nephi 5:13; compare with chapter heading for Moroni 2).

Chapter 40

3 Nephi 6–10

Introduction

In 3 Nephi 6–10 a warning example is given for the members of the Church of Jesus Christ in the last dispensation. The Nephite members of the Church who escaped destruction were those who repented and heeded the voice of the prophets.

Notes and Commentary

3 Nephi 6:10–16. Inequality Among the Nephites

As the Nephites began to prosper, what sin entered in among them? (see 3 Nephi 6:12–13). What did this inequality do to the Church? (see v. 14). What did Mormon say was the real cause of this iniquity? (see v. 15). What generally happens when people begin to believe that they are better than others? How does this part of Book of Mormon history substantiate Proverbs 16:18?

3 Nephi 6:17–30. “A State of Awful Wickedness”

As the Nephites began to “wilfully rebel against God” (3 Nephi 6:18), prophets of the Lord were sent to testify boldly of Christ and the redemption and against the sins and iniquities of the people (see v. 20). How did the wicked react to this preaching? (see vv. 21, 23). When complaints were registered with the governor, the chief judge in Zarahemla, how did these evil men circumvent the law? (see vv. 27–30). Regarding this, Elder Robert L. Simpson said:

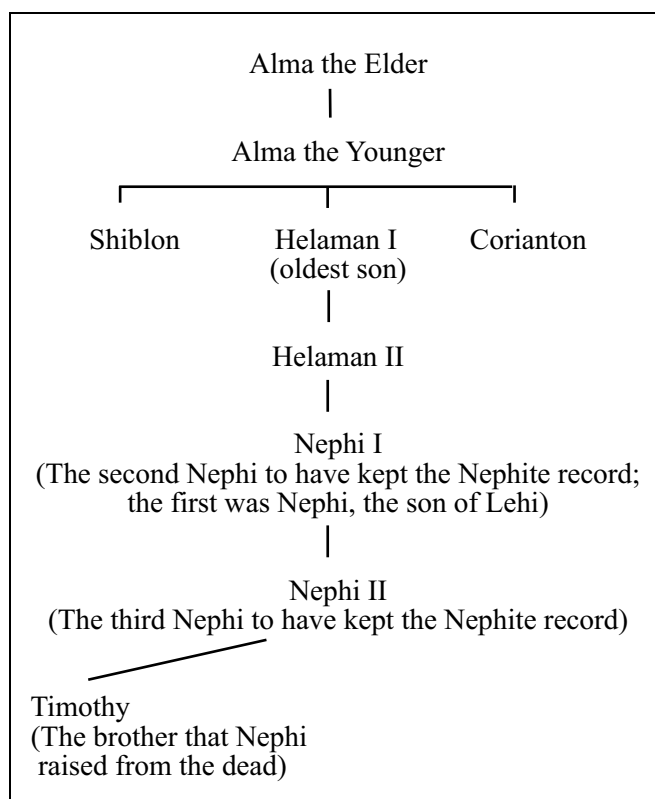
“Times have not changed. Less than two months ago, most of you read the disturbing article in our newspapers about a group of individuals who have established a so-called Satanic church, with the sole purpose to participate only in the realms of evil and darkness. They are in open defiance of and diametrically opposed to all of His holy purposes that bring us together in this great conference. Without a goodly number of God-fearing men committed to the cause of truth, these societies of evil could well take over our society.

“The only effective tool against evil and darkness is truth and light, particularly truth and light held in the hands of those bearing God’s Holy Priesthood: worthy, dedicated men such as I see before me here today.

“No man or boy who has accepted the commitment of priesthood can stand idly by, for if we do not abide in this covenant with the Lord, if we are less than anxiously engaged in doing something about it, he says: ‘. . . ye are not worthy of me.’ (D&C 98:15.)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, p. 69).

3 Nephi 8:1. A “Just Man”

Mormon wrote that a “just man” kept the Nephite record (see 3 Nephi 8:1). This man was Nephi, a grandson of Helaman (see 3 Nephi 23:7, 12). The following chart will be helpful in understanding how Nephi fit into Nephite genealogy:



3 Nephi 8:4–18. Control of the Elements

A tempest, as referred to in 3 Nephi 8:6, is an intense, violent wind. Such a furious storm is often accompanied by rain, hail, or snow and frequently causes destruction over a widespread area.

That God is in control of the elements has been attested to by the scriptures and modern prophets. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote about the Lord’s control of earthquakes:

“Since the earth has been in its present fallen or telestial state, it has been subject to *earthquakes*. These are part of the Lord’s plan; they come by his power and fulfil his purposes. By them he delivers his servants from perils, destroys the wicked, and leaves a sign that his hand has been in transcendent events. (Hela. 12:7–17.)

“Earthquakes attended the delivery from prison of Paul and Silas in the old world, of Lehi and Nephi in the new. (Acts 16:25–26; Hela. 5:27.) Both the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord were attested by earthquakes. (Matt. 27:54; 28:2.) Among the Nephites the quakings and destructions at the time of the crucifixion were so extensive that the whole face of the land was changed and the wicked and rebellious were destroyed. (3 Ne. 8; 9:1–14; 10:9–10.)

“Earthquakes are given as one of the signs of the times; they foreshadow the Second Coming. (Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11; D. & C. 45:33; 87:6.) By them the testimony of the Lord’s power is borne to the people of the earth. (D. & C. 43:25; 88:89), and when the glorious Second Coming itself arrives there will be ‘a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.’ (Rev. 16:18–20; 6:12–17; 8:5; 11:12–15, 19; Zech. 14:4–5; D. & C. 133:22–25.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 211–12).

3 Nephi 8:20–23. The Light of the World

When He who is the Light of the World died on Calvary, terrible darkness ensued. A pall of darkness lasting for three hours also fell on Jerusalem at this time (see Matthew 27:45), and “the earth did quake, and the rocks rent” (v. 51). This same kind of thick darkness prevailed in Egypt during the plagues brought on by Moses (see Exodus 10:21–23).

3 Nephi 9:19–22. “No More the Shedding of Blood”

In 3 Nephi 9:19 the Lord told the people that their blood sacrifices were to cease. Did the Lord, however, completely do away with sacrifice? According to verse 20, how was sacrifice to continue? Is this type of sacrifice still in effect today?

3 Nephi 10:1–8. The Gathering

The comparison between a hen gathering her chicks and the Lord gathering his people offers some interesting insights. A hen cares for her chicks and would sacrifice her life to protect them. When danger threatens, she gathers the chicks under her wings for protection. In a similar way the Lord loves his people, the house of Israel. He gave his life for his people and

has sought to gather them together so he could protect and nourish them. On many occasions, however, Israel has chosen to forsake the Lord.

Note in 3 Nephi 10:4 how the Lord told those who were spared that he had gathered the house of Israel often. In verse 5 he said he had tried to gather his children on other occasions, but they rejected him. What did the Lord say Israel must do to be gathered? (see v. 6). What would happen to those of the house of Israel, according to verse 7, if they did not come unto Christ? Why, then, did the people weep as recorded in verse 8? Could it be that they were mourning over those who could have been gathered and thus spared, but who had refused to do so? How does this principle relate to what we are doing today? Have we been called to assist in the gathering? For what purpose? (see D&C 115:6).

3 Nephi 10:9–17. Day of Destruction

According to 3 Nephi 10:11, the Nephites had known this day of destruction would come because they had been warned by their prophets (see 1 Nephi 12:4–5, 19:10–12, Helaman 14:20–29).

What did Mormon want us to learn from the account given in 3 Nephi 10:14–15? Up to the moment when the terrible destruction began, the unbelievers were sure that the prophets had been wrong. They must have thought the prophets were negative, gloomy, and out of touch with reality. Then suddenly, in one great disastrous moment, it became clear just how much in touch with reality the prophets had been. Unfortunately for tens of thousands of those who had previously scoffed, there was no time to reevaluate their skepticism.

Is it much different in our day? We have been amply warned of an impending judgment that will be every bit as terrible and devastating as that which occurred in A.D. 34 (see D&C 29:14–21, 43:19–25, 45:39–42, 88:87–91, 133:41–49). Yet the world at large either ignores such warnings or condescendingly views the prophets as religious fanatics who are out of touch with the real world.

In the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord warned: “And the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, *shall be cut off from among the people*” (D&C 1:14; emphasis added). Note also Mormon’s solemn words after the account of the

earlier destruction: “And now, whoso readeth, let him understand” (3 Nephi 10:14).

3 Nephi 10:12. “They Who Received the Prophets”

“On one occasion [Karl G. Maeser] was leading a party of young missionaries across the Alps. As they slowly ascended the steep slope, he looked back and saw a row of sticks thrust into the glacial snow to mark the one safe path across the otherwise treacherous mountains.

“Something about those sticks impressed him, and halting the company of missionaries he gestured toward them and said, ‘Brethren, there stands the priesthood. They are just common sticks like the rest of us—some of them may even seem to be a little crooked, but the position they hold makes them what they are. If we step aside from the path they mark, we are lost.’

“I bear witness, my brethren and sisters, fellow students, that in this Church men are as they indeed must be—called of God by prophecy. May we learn in our youth this lesson; it will see us faithful through all of the challenges of our lives. May we learn to follow the brethren” (Boyd K. Packer, *Follow the Brethren*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 23 Mar. 1965], p. 10).

Points to Ponder

- After a brief period of seven years of peace, contention again arose in the land. What caused it? (see 3 Nephi 6:10–16; note also Mormon’s commentary in v. 18).
- Why did Mormon give such detail concerning the destruction of some of the major Nephite cities? Before the Lord destroys a nation or a people, what does he do first? (see 3 Nephi 6:20).
- What did the thick darkness symbolize, and what did it teach the people? (see 3 Nephi 9:18).
- Why were the righteous saved? (see 3 Nephi 10:12). Does Doctrine and Covenants 1:14 have similar application for our day?

Chapter 41

3 Nephi 11–14

Introduction

The central message of every prophet has been the divinity of Jesus Christ. The account in 3 Nephi 11–14 is about the personal appearance of the Savior to the members of the Church on the American continent. Imagine the magnificence of that experience as you read about the visit of the glorified, resurrected Lord.

Notes and Commentary

3 Nephi 11:5–7. “Behold My Beloved Son”

President Ezra Taft Benson testified:

“How few people in all the history of the world have heard the actual voice of God the Father speaking to them. As the people looked heavenward, ‘they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them’ (v. 8).

“A glorious, resurrected being, a member of the Godhead, the Creator of innumerable worlds, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, stood before their very eyes!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, p. 4; or *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 5).

3 Nephi 11:11. “The Light and the Life of the World”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie indicated how our Lord is “the light and the life of the world” (3 Nephi 11:11):

“When our Lord says, ‘I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world’ (Ether 4:12), he is teaching that he is the source of life, light, and truth; that he sets the perfect example in their use; and that all men must look to him for these things” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 448).

3 Nephi 11:16–21. The Word *Hosanna*

“At the time of the appearance of the resurrected Jesus Christ to the Nephites, the multitude went forth, felt the resurrected body of the Savior, and testified that ‘it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come’ and then cried out ‘with one accord, saying: Hosanna!’ (3 Nephi 11:15–16.) The word *Hosanna* is a transliteration of a Hebrew word of supplication which means in essence ‘Oh, grant salvation.’ Evidently the people were asking the Savior to teach them the way to salvation; thus it is not

surprising that he immediately teaches them the basic principles and ordinances of the gospel” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 261–62).

3 Nephi 11:14–17. The Wounds in His Hands and Feet

“When the Savior comes to the Jews in the hour of their distress, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, 45:51–53, he will show them the wounds in his hands and in his feet. . . .

“The Prophet Zechariah has also prophesied of the Savior’s Second Coming and his appearance to the Jews, when they will flee from their enemies and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in twain making a valley in which they shall seek refuge. At that particular time he will appear and they shall say: ‘What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’ Then will they mourn, each family apart, because they had rejected their Lord.

“It is true that he also showed these wounds to the Nephites when he visited with them with the same purpose in view, to convince them of his identity, and give to them a witness of his suffering. It can hardly be accepted as a fact that these wounds have remained in his hands, side, and feet all through the centuries from the time of his crucifixion and will remain until his Second Coming. But they will appear to the Jews as a witness against their fathers and their stubbornness in following the teachings of their fathers. After their weeping and mourning they shall be cleansed” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:291–92).

3 Nephi 11:27–30. Sources of Contention and False Doctrine

“Among the Latter-day Saints, the preaching of false doctrines disguised as truths of the gospel, may be expected from people of two classes, and practically from these only; they are:

“First—The hopelessly ignorant, whose lack of intelligence is due to their indolence and sloth, who make but feeble effort, if indeed any at all, to better themselves by reading and study; those who are afflicted with a dread disease that may develop into an incurable malady—laziness.

“Second—The proud and self-vaunting ones, who read by the lamp of their own conceit; who interpret by rules of their own contriving; who have become a law unto themselves, and so pose as the sole judges of their own doings. More dangerously ignorant than the first.

“Beware of the lazy and the proud; their infection in each case is contagious; better for them and for all when they are compelled to display the yellow flag of warning, that the clean and uninfected may be protected” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 373).

3 Nephi 12–14. The Sermon on the Mount Repeated

The Sermon on the Mount is the Lord’s blueprint for perfection. Of this sermon Elder Harold B. Lee said:

“Christ came not only into the world to make an atonement for the sins of mankind but to set an example before the world of the standard of perfection of God’s law and of obedience to the Father. In his Sermon on the Mount the Master has given us somewhat of a revelation of his own character, which was perfect, or what might be said to be ‘an autobiography, every syllable of which he had written down in deeds,’ and in so doing has given us a blueprint for our own lives” (*Decisions for Successful Living*, pp. 55–56).

There are several additions or changes in the Book of Mormon sermon which add a great deal of light and knowledge about the teachings found therein. Book of Mormon critics often ask, “If Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon from golden plates thousands of years old, how come they use the identical language of the King James Version, which was written in 1611?” Hugh Nibley answered that question in the following manner:

“As to the ‘passages lifted bodily from the King James Version,’ we first ask, ‘How else does one quote scripture if not “bodily?”’ And why should anyone quoting the Bible to American readers of 1830 not follow the only version of the Bible known to them?

“Actually the Bible passages quoted in the Book of Mormon often differ from the King James Version, but where the latter is correct there is every reason why it should be followed. When Jesus and the Apostles and, for that matter, the Angel Gabriel quote the Scriptures in the New Testament do they recite from some mysterious Urtext? Do they quote the prophets of old in the ultimate original? Or do they

give their own inspired translations? No, they do not. They quote the Septuagint, a Greek version of the Old Testament prepared in the 3rd Century B.C. Why so? Because that happened to be the received standard version of the Bible accepted by the readers of the Greek New Testament.

“When ‘holy men of God’ quote the scriptures it is always the received standard version of the people they are addressing.

“We do not claim that the King James Version [or] the Septuagint are the original scriptures—in fact nobody on earth today knows where the original scriptures are or what they say. Inspired men have in every age been content to accept the received version of the people among whom they labored, with the Spirit giving correction where correction was necessary.

“Since the Book of Mormon is a translation, . . . into English for English-speaking people whose fathers for generations had known no other scriptures but the standard English Bible, it would be both pointless and confusing to present the scriptures to them in any other form so far as their teachings were correct” (“Literary Style Used in Book of Mormon Insured Accurate Translation,” *Church News*, 29 July 1961, p. 10).

3 Nephi 12–14. Clarity and Meaning for the New Testament Record

“It is perhaps safe to say that the Sermon on the Mount is the most quoted and the least understood of all the teachings of Jesus. The translation of Matthew’s account of this sermon in our present New Testament (Matthew 5–7) has caused many people to raise questions concerning the authenticity of the sermon. They ask such questions as the following: Why did the Savior teach that people were better off being poor in spirit than not poor in spirit, or that they were more blessed mourning than not mourning? When he said ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled,’ with what are they to be filled: hunger, thirst, or righteousness? Also, why did he counsel the people to ‘take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on’? What if all people literally followed this admonition? Who would plant and harvest the crops, feed the children, manufacture the clothes, etc. . . .

“When the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to the Nephites, he gave them the same sermon. In fact, he specifically told the Nephites, ‘Behold, ye have heard

the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father.’ (3 Nephi 15:1.) However, the account of this sermon in the Book of Mormon is much more complete and makes much more sense than the New Testament account. For example, in the Book of Mormon the Savior prefaced his sermon by indicating the teachings that were to follow applied only to those who would ‘come down into the depths of humility and be baptized . . . [and] be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and . . . receive a remission of their sins.’ (3 Nephi 12:2.) Then he related these prerequisite conditions to each of the Beatitudes that followed: ‘Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit *who come unto me*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *And again*, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.’ (3 Nephi 12:3–4. Italics added.) This more complete version of the sermon changes the entire emphasis of the Beatitudes. Here the Savior is not saying ‘you are more blessed if you mourn than if you do not mourn,’ but he is saying ‘If you are called upon to mourn, then you are blessed if you come unto me, are baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, etc.’ Thus, if you do truly hunger and thirst after righteousness, you shall be filled ‘with the Holy Ghost.’ (3 Nephi 12:6.)

“It is also of interest to note that each of the Beatitudes in the Book of Mormon begins with the coordinating conjunction ‘and,’ which helps to relate them back to the introductory statement” (Ludlow, *Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 263–64).

The following items help illustrate insights gained from the Book of Mormon sermon:

1. “*The salt of the earth*” (3 Nephi 12:13). The Bible account reads, “Ye are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). The Book of Mormon account indicates that to be “the salt of the earth” is a goal for which members of the Church should strive. In the Mosaic sacrificial ritual, salt was a token of covenants with God (see Numbers 18:19, 2 Chronicles 13:5). In a similar sense, Saints should be tokens or symbols of the Christlike life. Doctrine and Covenants 101:39–40 indicates what one must do to be accounted as the “salt of the earth.”
2. “*Whosoever is angry with his brother*” (3 Nephi 12:22). The New Testament account of the Savior’s teachings is, “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:22). The Savior’s teachings on this subject in the Book of Mormon

are the same except that the phrase “without a cause” is deleted.

3. “*If ye shall come unto me*” (3 Nephi 12:23). The Bible says, “If thou bring thy gift to the altar” (Matthew 5:23). The Book of Mormon clarifies this by stating that we cannot come unto Christ and at the same time have harsh feelings toward our fellowmen.
4. “*Suffer none of these things to enter into your heart*” (3 Nephi 12:29). The Book of Mormon account completely drops the biblical command, “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out. . . . If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off” (Matthew 5:29–30). These verses in the New Testament, which are obviously symbolical admonitions, have raised many questions among Bible readers. The Book of Mormon account clarifies the intended meaning of how one avoids lust: “Suffer none of these things to enter into your heart; . . . deny yourselves of these things” (3 Nephi 12:29–30). The Savior’s statement can also better be understood through Book of Mormon examples of how a true saint accepts persecution (see Helaman 3:33–35, 3 Nephi 6:13). We are to accept suffering and persecution patiently, prayerfully, and humbly.
5. “*I would that ye should be perfect*” (3 Nephi 12:48). Elder Joseph Fielding Smith commented on this perfection:

“Those who receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom are promised the fulness thereof. ‘All things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come.’ [D&C 76:59.] Our Father in heaven is infinite; he is perfect; he possesses all knowledge and wisdom. However, he is not jealous of his wisdom and perfection, but glories in the fact that it is possible for his children who obey him in all things and endure to the end to become like him.

“Man has within him the power, which the Father has bestowed upon him, so to develop in truth, faith, wisdom, and all the virtues, that eventually he shall become like the Father and the Son; this virtue, wisdom, and knowledge on the part of the faithful does not rob the Father and the Son, but adds to their glory and dominion. Thus it is destined that those who are worthy to become his sons and joint-heirs with our Redeemer, would be heirs of the Father’s kingdom, possessing the same attributes in their perfection,

as the Father and the Son now possess” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:35).

6. “*Vain repetitions*” (3 Nephi 13:7). The word *vain* means empty, hollow, deceiving, lacking genuineness. Vain repetitions in prayer can refer to words or phrases that are used without real thought, feeling, or meaning. It can also refer to set prayers that are repeated over and over. An example is the Zoramites’ rote prayer from the Rameumptom, which was thoughtlessly repeated each week (see Alma 31:14–22). For additional insight into what constitutes vain prayers, see Alma 34:28.
7. *The Lord’s Prayer* (see 3 Nephi 13:9–13). The prayer Jesus offered here drops the phrase, “Thy kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10). The reason may be that Jesus established his church and, therefore, the kingdom had come.
8. “*Take . . . no thought for the morrow*” (3 Nephi 13:34). The Book of Mormon clarifies the meaning of Matthew 6:25–32 by indicating that Jesus was speaking to his chosen Twelve for this portion of the sermon (see 3 Nephi 13:25–34). The Book of Mormon further clarifies this point by saying that after Jesus delivered this charge to the Twelve, he then turned and began to speak to the multitude again (see 3 Nephi 14:1).

3 Nephi 14:22–24. The Word *Do* Emphasized in the Scriptures

Regarding our acting upon the Lord’s commands, President Spencer W. Kimball said:

“There are many people in the Church today who have failed to do, and continue to argue against doing, the things that are requested and suggested by this great organization.

“The Lord said also, ‘Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. . . .’ (Matt. 7:21.) And I was thinking that there are as many wards and branches in the Church as there are people in this room, one for one. And what great accomplishment would be accomplished if every bishop and every branch president in all the world, wherever it’s possible (of course there are a few places where this is not permitted), had a storage such as has been suggested here this morning—and took to their three or four or five hundred members the same message, quoting scripture and insisting that the people of their wards and branches do the things the

Lord has requested, for we know that there are many who are failing.

“And then I hear them argue, ‘Well, suppose we do put away a lot and then someone comes and takes it from us, our neighbors who do not believe.’ That’s been answered this morning.

“And so my feeling is today that we emphasize these two scriptures: ‘Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.’ And the other: ‘Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?’

“Think of the number of people represented here this day by the stake presidents, mission presidents, and others who are directors, who have many people under them. Our 750 stakes—all of them including hundreds, sometimes thousands, of members—show the power that we have, if we go to work and actually push this matter until it is done. We talk about it, we listen to it, but sometimes we do not *do* the things which the Lord says” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1976, pp. 169–70; or *Ensign*, May 1976, p. 124).

Points to Ponder

- Consider carefully the following review of the Christlike qualities mentioned in 3 Nephi 11–14:
 - Seeks to understand others and does not have the spirit of contention (see 3 Nephi 11:28–30).
 - Believes in Christ (see v. 33).
 - Is striving to repent (see v. 38).
 - Has been baptized (see v. 38).
 - Has received the gift of the Holy Ghost (see v. 35).
 - Heeds the words of God’s chosen leaders (see 3 Nephi 12:1).
 - Mourns for personal sins (see v. 4).
 - Hungers and thirsts after righteousness (see v. 6).
 - Is merciful to others (see v. 7).
 - Is pure in heart (see v. 8).
 - Is a peacemaker (see v. 9).
 - Endures persecution patiently (see vv. 10–12).
 - Controls temper (see vv. 21–22).
 - Keeps thoughts pure and does not lust (see vv. 27–29).
 - Is honest and has integrity (see vv. 33–37).
 - Seeks to bless and love enemies (see vv. 39–45).
 - Gives financial contributions without desiring the praise of man (see 3 Nephi 13:1–4).
 - Prays and fasts in secret (see vv. 5–18).
 - Does not judge his fellowman harshly (see 3 Nephi 14:1–5).

Chapter 42

3 Nephi 15–18

Introduction

Jesus, “the law, and the light” (3 Nephi 15:9), continued teaching the people that everyone must look to him in order to receive eternal life. The Nephites heard Jesus pray to the Father for them, and they witnessed a portion of Christ’s power as he performed miracles among them.

Notes and Commentary

3 Nephi 15:1–10. Old Things and New Things

Jesus said that “old things had passed away, and that all things had become new” (3 Nephi 15:3). The law of Moses, the old covenant, was the preparatory gospel administered by the lesser priesthood (see D&C 84:26–27). When it was fulfilled, the new covenant, the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, was given.

It is important to understand what is meant by *the law* as opposed to *the prophets* (see 3 Nephi 15:10). At the time of Jesus the Jewish scriptures (our Old Testament) were divided into three major sections. The Law, or the Torah, included the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). The Prophets included the writings of the various prophets (such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel). The third section, the Writings, included the historical books (such as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and the poetic books (such as Psalms and Proverbs).

The prophecies and covenants given through the prophets but not fulfilled by the Atonement and Resurrection were not done away with, and are still in force. For example, the promises concerning the eventual gathering of Israel, its restoration to the lands of promise, and the events concerning the ushering in of the Millennium belong to the category Jesus called the Prophets. Some of these promises go all the way back to Adam. Enoch foretold many of them. They are involved in Abraham’s covenant. Moses himself gave many of the details concerning these prophetic promises. They also include teachings, such as the Ten Commandments, which never are done away with. Jesus repeated a portion of Malachi and told the Nephites to record it (see 3 Nephi 24–25). From this, Latter-day Saints know that the law of tithing was not

a part of the law of Moses that was fulfilled in Christ, as some churches claim.

The law that was done away with in Christ was the strict ceremonies, observances, and offerings peculiar to the law of Moses. Thus Jesus could say, “For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me” (3 Nephi 15:8).

Note that it was Jesus who instituted, fulfilled, and announced the fulfillment of the law of Moses (see v. 5).

3 Nephi 15:9. “The Law, and the Light”

You will not discover the superiority of the gospel over the law of Moses if you think the law of Moses was harder to live than the gospel. The following statement by Elder Neal A. Maxwell helps illustrate this:

“One of the ironies which is fostered, at times innocently, in the Church, is the feeling we have that the spirit of the law is superior to the letter of the law because for some reason it seems more permissive or less apt to offend others. The reverse is true. The spirit of the law is superior because it demands more of us than the letter of the law. The spirit of the law insists that we do more than merely comply superficially. It means, too, that we must give attention to the things that matter most *and still not leave the others undone*” (*For the Power Is in Them*, pp. 46–47).

3 Nephi 15:11–13. A Promised Land

Each of the twelve tribes of Israel was assigned an area of land for their inheritance in the land of Canaan. In addition to the inheritance they received there, the descendants of Joseph also received the land of the Americas as part of their inheritance. The Savior told the twelve Nephite disciples that they and their people were “a remnant of the house of Joseph” (3 Nephi 15:12), and “this is the land of your inheritance” (v. 13).

3 Nephi 16:5–15. Blessings Reserved for the Gentiles

The covenant the Father made with the house of Israel included the blessings of the gospel, “which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal”

(Abraham 2:11). When the house of Israel rejected the gospel in its fulness, its blessings were removed and given to the Gentiles, hence the Savior's words that the Gentiles too would receive the fulness of the gospel (see 3 Nephi 16:6–7).

When the Gentiles reject the gospel, the word of the Lord will be taken from them and given back to the house of Israel (see vv. 10–12). If the Gentiles then repent and return unto the Lord, “behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel” (v. 13). Should the Gentiles continue to reject the covenant, however, they will be trodden down and cast out from the promised blessings (see v. 15).

It should be remembered that the Book of Mormon uses the title *Gentile* in a special way (see student manual commentary on 1 Nephi 13:1–3).

3 Nephi 17:4. “Not Lost unto the Father”

Although the scattered tribes of Israel are lost to the knowledge of man, they are not lost to God. He knows where they are, “for he knoweth whither he hath taken them” (3 Nephi 17:4). The fact that the Savior would visit them is interesting in that it suggests there will someday be available a third account of Jesus' visits to his people.

“Earlier in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 29:11–14), the Lord promises that in the mouths of three great scriptural witnesses the divinity of Christ would be established. It is of interest to note that evidently the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to all of the peoples who were to write these great scriptural witnesses. He appeared as a resurrected being to the Jews, from whom we get the Bible; he appeared as a resurrected being to the Nephites, from whom we get the Book of Mormon; and he promises here that he is going to appear as a resurrected being to the lost tribes of Israel, from whom shall come the third great scriptural witness” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 271).

3 Nephi 18:1–14. The First Nephite Sacrament Meeting

What committed Latter-day Saint does not long to be filled with the Spirit? What disciple of Christ would not be overwhelmed with joy at the possibility of having his soul filled so that it would never hunger and thirst again? This is the message of 3 Nephi 18.

The Nephites had seen the resurrected Christ descend from the heavens, touched his hands and feet, and learned for themselves that this was no vision but a real and tangible being. They had sat at his feet and

heard his teachings, and heard him utter things they were incapable of repeating. They had seen many people with severe physical handicaps healed by his touch, and witnessed fire and angels come down from heaven to encircle their children. Any one of these events would be spiritually overwhelming, and it is difficult to imagine the spiritual impact of all of them happening together.

With that spiritual preparation the Nephites were given the ordinance of the sacrament. We are told that after they partook of the bread and wine, they “were filled” (see vv. 4–5, 9). What were the Nephites filled with—the bread and wine? Though it is not clarified here, the Savior earlier had promised that those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . shall be filled with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:6). The next day when the Savior came again, he said, “He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled” (3 Nephi 20:8).

We can experience what the Nephites experienced that day. While we may not have the same remarkable events occur to prepare us for being born again, we can in many ways prepare ourselves. Elder Marion G. Romney talked about making the partaking of the sacrament an active, spiritual experience:

“Now partaking of the sacrament is not to be a mere passive experience. We are not to remember the Lord's suffering and death only as we may remember some purely secular historical event. Participating in the sacrament service is meant to be a vital and a spiritualizing experience. Speaking of it, the Savior said:

“ . . . And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me.” (III Nephi 18:7.)

“In order to testify, one's mind has to function, and it must be concentrated upon the thing to be testified. And we are not only to partake of the emblems of the sacrament in remembrance of the Redeemer, testifying that we do always remember him, but we are also thereby to witness unto the Father that we are willing to take upon us the name of his Son and that we will keep his commandments. This amounts to a virtual renewal of the covenant of baptism, for you will recall that candidates for baptism are, among other things, to

“ . . . witness before the church that they . . . are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the

end. (D. & C. 20:37.)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1946, pp. 39–40).

President David O. McKay taught that when a spiritual price is paid, we can reap the blessings of being filled with the Spirit:

“No more sacred ordinance is administered in the Church of Christ than the administration of the sacrament. . . .

“There are three things fundamentally important associated with the administration of the sacrament. The first is self-discernment. It is introspection. ‘This do in remembrance of me,’ but we should partake *worthily*, each one examining himself with respect to his worthiness.

“Secondly, there is a covenant made; a *covenant* even more than a promise. . . .

“Thirdly, there is another blessing, and that is a sense of close relationship with the Lord. There is an opportunity to commune with oneself and to commune with the Lord. . . .

“Brethren, we recommend that we surround this sacred ordinance with more reverence, with perfect order, that each one who comes to the house of God may meditate upon his goodness and silently and prayerfully express appreciation for God’s goodness. Let the sacrament hour be one experience of the day in which the worshiper tries at least to realize within himself that it is possible for him to commune with his God.

“Great events have happened in this Church because of such communion, because of the responsiveness of the soul to the inspiration of the Almighty. I know it is real. . . .

“But the lesson I wish to leave tonight is: Let us make that sacrament hour one of the most impressive means of coming in contact with God’s spirit. Let the Holy Ghost, to which we are entitled, lead us into his presence, and may we sense that nearness, and have a prayer offered in our hearts which he will hear” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1946, pp. 112, 114, 116).

3 Nephi 18:22–32. A Sacred Ordinance

The sacrament is a sacred ordinance and should be participated in only when a person is striving sincerely to keep the covenants thereof. However, if a person waits until he is totally free from sin, he will never partake of the sacrament. The sacrament is a source of spiritual power, and not to partake cuts a person off from that power and compounds the problem of

becoming more worthy. However, sins of a serious nature may cause us to lose the privilege of partaking of the sacrament through probation, disfellowshippment, or excommunication. Generally, if a sin is serious enough to warrant not partaking of the sacrament for any length of time, it is probably serious enough to warrant a discussion of that transgression with priesthood leaders.

Elder Delbert L. Stapley explained that there is a way to become worthy to partake of the sacrament again, even in the case of transgression: “Emphasizing as I have, the importance of worthiness in partaking of the sacrament of our Lord, maybe there are some of you, I hope not, that have a feeling you have been unworthily partaking. Remember, we have in the Church the principles of repentance, and of forgiveness. Certainly one who truly repents with all their heart and [does] the works of righteousness can be forgiven and the Lord will remember their sins no more. Such an individual can reinstate himself [with the help and counsel of priesthood leaders] to worthily partake of the emblems of our Lord” (*The Sacrament*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 8 May 1956], p. 9).

Points to Ponder

- What did Jesus mean when he said, “I am the law, and the light”? (3 Nephi 15:9).
- Read John 10:16. What did the Savior mean in this verse?
- Why was the Savior’s joy full? (see 3 Nephi 17:20).
- Now that you have read several scriptures and other teachings about the sacrament, develop your own plan for making the sacrament a more meaningful part of your life.

Chapter 43

3 Nephi 19–23

Introduction

The Savior continued to minister to the Nephite Saints. He foretold of events that would transpire upon the earth prior to the glorious Second Coming.

Notes and Commentary

3 Nephi 19:10–13. “Organized Anew . . . under the Gospel”

“When Christ appeared to the Nephites on this continent, he commanded them to be baptized, although they had been baptized previously for the remission of their sins. . . . The Savior commanded Nephi and the people to be baptized again, because he had organized anew the Church under the gospel. [3 Nephi 19:7–15.] Before that it had been organized under the law. [3 Nephi 9:15–22, 11:10–40, 12:18–19, 15:4–10.]

“For the same reason Joseph Smith and those who had been baptized prior to April 6, 1830, were again baptized on the day of the organization of the Church” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:336).

3 Nephi 19:14–24. Inspired Prayer

“Perfect prayers are those which are inspired, in which the Spirit reveals the words which should be used. (3 Ne. 19:24.) *‘And if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done. But know this, it shall be given you what you shall ask.’* (D. & C. 50:29–30.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 586).

Compare this statement with what Paul wrote in Romans 8:26.

3 Nephi 19:25–30. The Godhead

One evidence of apostasy is the belief that the members of the Godhead are one being. From passages of scripture in the New Testament that say the members of the Godhead are one, some Bible students have concluded that they are one in substance. As recorded in John 17:20–22, Jesus prayed to the Father for his disciples and said:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, *even as we are one*” (emphasis added).

The Book of Mormon clarifies one meaning of this passage. According to 3 Nephi 19:28–29, how were Jesus and the Father one? How did the disciples become one with them? When we strive to become pure and clean, do we not become like them and thus one with them? After we have been purified, we receive the glory and power of Christ in us as Christ received glory and power from his Father.

3 Nephi 19:31–36. Great Faith

Note in 3 Nephi 19:33 how the multitude understood in their hearts the words of Christ’s prayer. What might this refer to?

According to verses 35 and 36, what are the conditions upon which great spiritual experiences are given? (see also Ether 12:6).

3 Nephi 20:8–9. “Filled with the Spirit”

“I feel that a comprehension of the sacredness of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is important to the members of the Church. We partake of physical food—that is, we partake of bread and water etc., to nourish the physical body. It is just as necessary that we partake of the emblems of the body and blood of our risen Lord to increase our spiritual strength” (George Albert Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1908, p. 34).

3 Nephi 20:10–22. The Scattered Remnants of Israel

“When the Lord is speaking of his covenants, he is not confining them to the descendants of Lehi, but applies them to all the house of Israel. ‘And verily, verily, I say unto you, that when they [the covenants as recorded by Isaiah] shall be fulfilled then is the fulfilling of the covenant which the Father hath made unto his people, O house of Israel. And then shall the remnants, which shall be scattered abroad upon the

face of the earth, be gathered in from the east and from the west, and from the south and from the north; and they shall be brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them. And the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you this land, for your inheritance.’ [3 Nephi 20:12–14.]

“Much of our misunderstanding, however, seems to come out of the interpretation placed upon the succeeding verses: ‘And I say unto you, that if the Gentiles do not repent after the blessing which they shall receive, after they have scattered my people—Then shall ye, who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, go forth among them; and ye shall be in the midst of them who shall be many; and ye shall be among them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. And I will gather my people together as a man gathereth his sheaves into the floor.’ [3 Nephi 20:15–18.]

“Are we justified in applying this merely to the Lamanites and saying that they are to go forth as a young lion pouring out vengeance upon the gentiles? Also does the phrase, ‘Ye who are a remnant of the house of Jacob,’ in verse 16, have reference just to the Lamanites? The verses which follow indicate that it has reference to the remnants of Israel, which had been scattered in all lands. To apply it to the Lamanites in face of the entire theme of this discourse, in my judgment, narrows it too greatly. Then again, this prophecy was also given to Micah and has reference to ‘many people,’ not merely to the gentiles on this land” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:249–50).

3 Nephi 20:25–27. Becoming Children of the Covenant

“Is it necessary that we be of the house of Israel in order to accept the gospel and all the blessings pertaining to it? If so, how do we become of the house of Israel, by adoption or by direct lineage?

“Every person who embraces the gospel becomes of the house of Israel. In other words, they become members of the chosen lineage, or Abraham’s children through Isaac and Jacob unto whom the promises were made. The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and

confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:245–46).

3 Nephi 21:9–11. “My Servant”

A careful reading of 3 Nephi 21:9–11 suggests that the Lord was referring to the Prophet Joseph Smith when he said, “The life of my servant shall be in my hand” (v. 10; see also Isaiah 52:13–15, 3 Nephi 20:43–44).

3 Nephi 21:23. “The Remnant of Jacob”

“The ‘New Jerusalem’ of the last days will be built on the American continent by (1) ‘the remnant of Jacob,’ (2) the Gentiles who ‘shall come into the covenant and be numbered among . . . the remnant of Jacob,’ and (3) ‘as many of the house of Israel as shall come.’ (3 Nephi 21:22–25. Read also 3 Nephi 20:22; Ether 13:1–12.) After quoting extensively from chapters 20 and 21 of 3 Nephi, President Marion G. Romney explained the role of the ‘remnant of Jacob’ in building the New Jerusalem:

“From these declarations by Jesus, it is certain that the believing, repentant, righteous, faithful Indians shall be among “the remnant of Jacob” who are to build the New Jerusalem to which the Savior will come.

“As early as 1831 the Lord assured the Prophet Joseph that “before the great day of” his coming should arrive “Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose.”” (D&C 49:24.)” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 281).

3 Nephi 23:1. “Search These Things Diligently”

“Search the scriptures—search the revelations which we publish, and ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to His glory nothing doubting, He will answer you by the power of His Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves and not for another. You will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation. No; for when men receive their instruction from Him that made them, they know how He will save them. Then again we say: Search the Scriptures, search the Prophets and learn what portion of them belongs to you” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 11–12).

3 Nephi 23:1–5. Searching the Scriptures

A person can read the scriptures casually. But when a person *searches* the scriptures the following words apply: meditate (see Joshua 1:8), study (see 2 Timothy 2:15), heed (see 1 Nephi 15:25), hear (see 1 Nephi 19:24), ponder (see 2 Nephi 4:15).

Notice that the Savior particularly directed his listeners to *search* the writings of the prophet Isaiah (see 3 Nephi 23:1). In verse 2 we learn why; because Isaiah “spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel.” The Savior also commanded that the writings of all the prophets be carefully studied, for they too testify of important truths (see v. 5).

3 Nephi 23:14. Expounding “All the Scriptures in One”

The mission of Jesus is the major focus of the scriptures; therefore, all scriptures testify of him. Jacob recorded that “none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ” (Jacob 7:11). Nephi stated, “My soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; . . . and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him” (2 Nephi 11:4). All scriptures rise from and run into a common source—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Thus, to expound the scriptures is to speak, teach, write, and testify of Christ.

Points to Ponder

- Compare 3 Nephi 19:25, 30 with the blessing promised to each of us in Doctrine and Covenants 88:52, 58, 60.
- Read and study the cross-references listed in 3 Nephi 21:12*a*. Add Mormon 5:24 and 1 Nephi 14:14 to these references. Why would the Lord use the metaphor of “a lion among the beasts of the forest” (3 Nephi 21:12) to describe Israel’s power in the last days?
- Outline the events in 3 Nephi 21:22–28 as foretold by the Savior.
- Why did the Savior say, “Great are the words of Isaiah”? (3 Nephi 23:1–3).

Chapter 44

3 Nephi 24–30

Introduction

The Savior concluded his visit to the Nephite Saints by teaching them of all things from the beginning to the Second Coming. Never in the history of our earth have members of the Church as a collective body received greater blessings than these Saints.

Notes and Commentary

3 Nephi 24:1. “Shall Suddenly Come to His Temple”

Notice that in 3 Nephi 24 the Savior again demonstrated the value of scripture. He supplied the Nephites with the writings of Malachi, an Old Testament prophet who lived nearly two hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem. His teachings would not have been on the plates of brass.

One fulfillment of the prophecy found in verse 1 happened when the Lord appeared in the Kirtland Temple on 3 April 1836 (see D&C 110), but the complete fulfillment will take place as part of the Second Coming.

3 Nephi 24:3–7. An Offering by the Levites

“It is generally supposed that sacrifice [blood sacrifice] was entirely done away when the Great Sacrifice [i.e.,] the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was offered up, and that there will be no necessity for the ordinance of sacrifice in future; but those who assert this are certainly not acquainted with the duties, privileges and authority of the Priesthood, or with the Prophets.

“The offering of sacrifice has ever been connected and forms a part of the duties of the Priesthood. . . .

“These sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 172–73).

3 Nephi 24:8–12. Tithing

President Heber J. Grant testified that “if the people will pay their tithes and offerings, they will not

only be blessed in their material affairs, but they will be abundantly blessed with increased outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord” (*Gospel Standards*, p. 106). This is a part of the promise the Lord made through his servant Malachi. The Lord will not only open the windows of heaven and pour down spiritual blessings, but he will also preserve our fruits and vegetables—the labor of our hands—from destruction as well (see Malachi 3:8–12).

Concerning our fast offerings, President Marion G. Romney said: “One of the important things the Lord has told us to do is to be liberal in our payment of fast offerings. I would like you to know that there are great rewards for so doing—both spiritual and temporal rewards. The Lord says that the efficacy of our prayers depends upon our liberality to the poor” (in Conference Report, Mar.–Apr. 1979, p. 135; or *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 95).

3 Nephi 24:13–18. The Lord’s “Jewels”

A jewel is a precious stone measured by its intrinsic and extrinsic value in the marketplace of men. God’s jewels, as indicated in 3 Nephi 24:13–18, are those people who keep his ordinances and do not speak against their Lord. Those characteristics show the way to “discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (v. 18; see also D&C 60:4, 101:3, Exodus 28:15–21).

3 Nephi 25. Left Without Root or Branch

“It would be well to consider this verse [Malachi 4:1; see also 3 Nephi 25:1] carefully to see what Malachi wrote under inspiration from the Lord. He meant that if we do not do things in the Lord’s way, we act wickedly and hence would be destroyed. What is meant by the word *root*? I could well ask, What are my roots? Why, my roots are where I came from. My roots are my parents, my progenitors or ancestors in a direct bloodline. The blood that runs in my veins came to me through my father and my mother, through my grandmothers and my grandfathers, and so on back through the direct lineage of my father and mother. What then is meant by the word *branch*? If I consider myself as the trunk of the tree, nourished and supported by my roots, then the branches constitute that which comes from me. My branches are my

children and my grandchildren, etc. In other words, my branches are the posterity that comes from me as branches spring from the trunk of a tree” (Theodore M. Burton, *God’s Greatest Gift*, pp. 194–95).

If men are to have both their roots and branches after resurrection and judgment, important ordinances must be tended to which serve to guarantee such blessings. These are the higher ordinances of exaltation taught within the temples of the Lord.

Referring to Malachi’s prophesy of the sending of Elijah (see 3 Nephi 25:5), Joseph Smith taught: “Why send Elijah? Because he holds the keys of the authority to administer in all the ordinances of the Priesthood; and without the authority is given, the ordinances could not be administered in righteousness” (*Teachings*, p. 172).

Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on 3 April 1836 in the Kirtland Temple. There he restored the keys of the sealing power. This authority binds on earth and in heaven all who enter into the new and everlasting covenant of priesthood and of marriage and who receive all other ordinances necessary for salvation. In this sense, for those who accept and are faithful to the ordinances of God’s house, families are forever.

“The higher ordinances, the greater blessings which are essential to exaltation in the kingdom of God, and which can only be obtained in certain places, no man has a right to perform except as he receives the authority to do it from the one who holds the keys. It makes no difference how great an office you have, what position in the Church you hold, you cannot officiate unless the keys, the sealing power, is there back of it. That is the thing that counts, and that is why Elijah came. . . .

“Elijah restored to this Church and, if they would receive it, to the world, the keys of the sealing power; and that sealing power puts the stamp of approval upon every ordinance that is done in this Church and more particularly those that are performed in the temples of the Lord. Through that restoration, each of you, my brethren, has the privilege of going into this house or one of the other temples (I believe most of you have done so) to have your wife sealed to you for time and for all eternity, and your children sealed to you also, or better, have them born under that covenant.

“What a glorious privilege it is to know that the family organization will remain intact. It is not destroyed. It does not come to an end when we have complied with the divine law, by virtue of the keys which are held by the President of the Church” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:129–30).

3 Nephi 26:6–12. Hidden Scripture

“Now the Lord has placed us on probation as members of the Church. He has given us the Book of Mormon, which is the lesser part, to build up our faith through our obedience to the counsels which it contains, and when we ourselves, members of the Church, are willing to keep the commandments as they have been given to us and show our faith as the Nephites did for a short period of time, then the Lord is ready to bring forth the other record and give it to us, but we are not ready now to receive it. Why? Because we have not lived up to the requirements in this probationary state in the reading of the record which had been given to us and in following its counsels” (Joseph Fielding Smith, in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1961, p. 20).

3 Nephi 27:1–10. “Take Upon You the Name of Christ”

“The Nephites believed in Christ; they wrote and prophesied of him and his mission, and while there is no opprobrium that can justly be attached to one who believes in the Book of Mormon, there is no valid reason why Latter-day Saints should speak of themselves as ‘Mormons’ or of the Church as the ‘Mormon Church.’ Missionaries should not be engaged in ‘selling Mormonism,’ but in the mission of persuading people to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and of becoming members of *his* Church—The Church of Jesus Christ. The term *Latter-day Saints* is added to the name merely to distinguish us from the former-day Saints. . . .

“While there can be no disgrace nor condemnation in being called ‘Mormons,’ and the Church, the ‘Mormon Church,’ the fact remains, and this we should all emphasize, that we belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the name the Lord has given by which we are to be known and called” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:174–75).

3 Nephi 27:11–17. “The Fire, from Whence There Is No Return”

“The revelations also speak of the day when the Lord’s vineyard shall be burned, a day when the righteous shall be preserved, but one in which every corruptible thing shall be consumed, in which the elements shall melt with fervent heat and all things shall become new. (D. & C. 101:23–25; Mal. 3: 4.) That is the day in which the tares shall be burned (D. & C. 101:66), in which the Lord will ‘consume the wicked with unquenchable fire.’ (D. & C. 63:32–34, 54; Matt. 3:12; Luke 3:17.) Finally, all those who suffer the second death shall suffer the vengeance of *eternal fire* (D. & C. 63:17; 76:44, 105); their torment shall be ‘as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever.’ (Alma 12:17.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 280).

In one sense this fire is figurative because it does not bring an end to the existence of the wicked individuals; they go on living in eternity. But the fire is real in the sense that it causes actual mental pain and remorse. Doctrine and Covenants 19:1–20 also discusses the effects of this suffering.

3 Nephi 27:19–22. Sanctification by the Holy Ghost

The fourth article of faith tells us that baptism is “by immersion for the remission [or taking away] of sins.” Being immersed in water symbolizes, among other things, the cleansing or washing away of our sins. The cleansing, however, is symbolic. Sins are not literally washed off, ending up in the water of the baptismal font. But how are sins and the effects of sin upon a person taken away?

Two things work together to bring about this cleansing—the scriptural word is sanctification. First, sanctification is made possible because of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. He paid the price with his own life to meet the demands of justice. The Lord told Adam that we are sanctified by the blood of Christ (see Moses 6:59–60). It was the giving of this blood, the symbol of life (see Leviticus 17:11), which makes our sanctification possible. Second, a person is actually cleansed or purified of the terrible effects of sin by the sanctifying, cleansing, purging influence of the Holy Ghost. We are “sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 27:20). Nephi wrote that when we repent and are baptized, “then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17). Alma taught this doctrine as well (see Alma 13:12).

Immediately after teaching this doctrine of faith, repentance, baptism, and the reception of the Holy Ghost, Jesus said, “This is my gospel” (3 Nephi 27:21). Compare this to Christ’s teachings in 3 Nephi 11:31–40.

3 Nephi 28. Transfigured and Translated Beings

We gain most of our understanding about translated beings from 3 Nephi 28:

1. They never taste of death or endure the pains of death (see vv. 7–8).
2. They will be changed from mortality to immortality in the twinkling of an eye (see v. 8).
3. They experience no pain while in the flesh and no sorrow except for the sins of the world (see v. 9).
4. They have power over the evil men of the earth (see vv. 19–22).
5. They are like the angels of God, administering to whomsoever they will (see v. 30).
6. A change is effected on their bodies so that Satan can have no power over them, and they are sanctified in the flesh and are holy (see v. 39).
7. They remain in a translated state until the Judgment Day (see v. 40).

In verses 13–15 Mormon explained that translated beings are also transfigured. Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined this state as follows:

“*Transfiguration* is a special change in appearance and nature which is wrought upon a person or thing by the power of God. This divine transformation is from a lower to a higher state; it results in a more exalted, impressive, and glorious condition. . . .

“By the power of the Holy Ghost many prophets have been transfigured so as to stand in the presence of God and view the visions of eternity. Speaking of such an occasion in his life, Moses recorded: ‘Now mine own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in his presence; but his glory was upon me; and I beheld his face, for I was transfigured before him.’ (Moses 1:11; D. & C. 67:11.) . . .

“Similarly, when the Three Nephites ‘were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard

unspeakable things,' they were transfigured” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 803).

The difference, then, between transfiguration and translation is that transfiguration is more temporary. The Three Nephites were transfigured for a time so that they could view the visions of eternity. They were also translated, which condition is of a longer duration, until the Judgment Day.

3 Nephi 29. A Warning to the Wicked

In 3 Nephi 29 Mormon warned the wicked that the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the latter days is a sign that the restoration of the children of Israel to the lands of their inheritance is beginning to be fulfilled (see v. 1), the words of the prophets shall all be fulfilled (see vv. 2–3), and the Lord will bring down justice on the wicked (see vv. 4–9).

3 Nephi 30. A Commandment to Repent

Who commanded Mormon to write what he did? What messages did Mormon have for our day? What did he tell us to turn from? What did he tell us to do? Why do you think Mormon felt so strongly about what he said?

Points to Ponder

- The scriptural account does not tell us how “all things, even from the beginning until the time that [Christ] should come in his glory” (3 Nephi 26:3) could be taught in as short a time as they were, but divine power seems manifest in the teaching process. Even the little children were able to be involved in this kind of teaching, as the Lord “loosed their tongues that they could utter” (v. 14).
- The closing words of 3 Nephi are not Mormon’s words. He wrote, “Hear the words of Jesus Christ, . . . behold he commandeth me that I should write, saying:” (v. 1). What follows is an appeal to the Gentiles to repent. This appeal shows how earnestly the Lord wants the Gentiles to join with Israel (see v. 2).

Chapter 45

4 Nephi 1

Introduction

In 3 Nephi the Savior outlined the path that all people must follow in order to receive the blessings of heaven. In 4 Nephi we see the results of following that path, and we also see the consequences of disobedience.

Notes and Commentary

4 Nephi. Book of Nephi

When the Book of Mormon was first printed, 3 and 4 Nephi were each called Book of Nephi. In 1879 Elder Orson Pratt, authorized to prepare a new edition of the Book of Mormon for the Church, added Third and Fourth to the two books in order to help distinguish one from the other.

In 4 Nephi Mormon condensed approximately 285 years of writings and history into four pages, a single chapter of forty-nine verses. The four original writers of the material Mormon abridged were Nephi, the son of Nephi the disciple of Christ, Amos, the son of Nephi, and Amos and Ammaron, the sons of the first Amos (see 4 Nephi 1:19–21, 47–48).

4 Nephi 1:2. “No Contentions and Disputations”

What enabled the people at this time to achieve such a remarkable society and to maintain it for such a long time?

“There have been times when certain peoples of the earth have been willing to listen to the voice of God, when they have had among them prophets to teach them, when they have been directed by constant revelation, when their hearts have been set upon righteousness, and one condition of that kind we read of very briefly in the Bible. But there are very few sentences recorded regarding it. It was during the time of Enoch. So righteous did his people become that the Lord took them from the earth. [Gen. 5:22–24; Heb. 11:5; Moses 6; 7; 8.]

“Upon this continent there was another time of peace and righteousness that prevailed when people were willing to listen to the voice of the Lord. We do not know just how far this influence and this righteousness has prevailed among other peoples from the beginning, because our history is so brief. But

upon this continent, for 200 years following the crucifixion of our Redeemer, the people lived in this state of righteousness. . . .

“What a glorious time that must have been when everybody was happy, when everybody was at peace, when everyone loved his neighbor as himself, and above all he loved God, because we are informed here that the thing which brought about this condition of happiness was the fact that the love of God was in the hearts of the people. There never will be a time of peace, happiness, justice tempered by mercy, when all men will receive that which is their right and privilege to receive, until they get in their hearts the love of God” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:319–20).

4 Nephi 1:19–49. A Return to Wickedness

After describing the glory and happiness during the “Zion” period of the Nephite society, Mormon quickly sketched how his people moved from that state of complete righteousness to a state of total wickedness. Covering so many years of history in only a few verses suggests that Mormon meant to indicate only the major steps or problems that led to this downfall. These problems included the following:

1. A group of Nephites revolted from the Church and called themselves Lamanites (see 4 Nephi 1:20).
2. The people became proud of their exceeding prosperity and began wearing costly clothing and adornments (see v. 24).
3. The law of consecration was abandoned (see v. 25).
4. The people began to be divided into social classes (see v. 26).
5. False churches were organized to get gain (see vv. 26–28).
6. Followers of the true church were persecuted (see vv. 29–34).
7. There was a great division among the people (see vv. 35–38).
8. The children were taught to reject the truths of the gospel (see vv. 38–39).

9. The wicked became more numerous than the righteous (see v. 40).
10. Secret oaths and combinations were started again (see v. 42).
11. The righteous people began to be proud and seek the things of the world (see vv. 43–45).
12. Gadianton conspiracy overran the whole land (see v. 46).

4 Nephi 1:20, 35–39. Lamanite Heritage

“We are informed that only the more righteous part of the people were spared from the devastating destruction that preceded the appearance of the Savior on this continent. Certainly among this number must have been many who had been Lamanites as well as many of those who were Nephites. It is interesting to ponder the language of the verses which describe those who remained. Note the use of the past perfect tense with reference to those who had been Lamanites: ‘. . . behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared, and also those who *had been called* Lamanites, who had been spared, did have great favors shown unto them. . . .’

“This becomes the more significant when we read from 4 Nephi of the conditions which prevailed among the people following the Savior’s visitation: “There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.’

“Those who lived to establish the Church of Jesus Christ in America after the Savior had ministered to them were apparently known only as the people of Nephi. A graphic description of them is given in these verses:

““And now, behold, it came to pass that the people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly fair and delightsome people.

““And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them.’

“The curse which had been placed upon those who had been Lamanites had obviously been removed. The curse had been imposed until ‘they shall repent of their iniquities.’ Repentance was complete. Conditions of unsurpassed righteousness prevailed for 200 years. The two lines had become as one. This fact is of profound importance to the Lamanite of today who,

having accepted the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, seeks for the restored blessings of his fathers. Not Father Laman and Father Lemuel, but the fathers who for two centuries demonstrated to the world for all time that God glories in those who are obedient to his will and blesses their lives with peace, security, and happiness which surpass the understanding of natural man.

“After more than 200 years of unity and peace, the spirit of pride and contention began to find place among a segment of the people. This was the same spirit which had posses[s]ed the rebellious sons of Lehi in the beginning: ‘. . . and there was still peace in the land, save it were a small part of the people who had revolted from the church and taken upon them the name of Lamanites; therefore there began to be Lamanites again in the land.’

“It is significant that the name ‘Lamanite’ here appears to become a generic term. That is, it refers to a general classification of people—those who revolted from the Church. These people may or may not have been the direct descendants of Laman and Lemuel. Whatever the case, it is evident that these people eventually incurred the same curse which had come upon the seed of Laman and Lemuel in the beginning” (Dean L. Larsen, *You and the Destiny of the Indian*, pp. 21–22).

Points to Ponder

- What blessings came to the Nephites as a result of their following the path the Savior outlined for them?
- What were the first steps the Nephites took toward the loss of their “perfect” society?

Chapter 46

Mormon 1–5

Introduction

These chapters repeat the message that prevails throughout the Book of Mormon—there is no weapon that can prevail against the righteous, except their own unrighteousness.

Notes and Commentary

Mormon 1:1. The Meaning of the Word *Mormon*

In an effort to correct an error in relation to the word *Mormon*, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote the following letter to the editor of the *Times and Seasons*, an early Church publication:

“SIR:—Through the medium of your paper I wish to correct an error among men that profess to be learned, liberal and wise; and I do it the more cheerfully because I hope sober-thinking and sound-reasoning people will sooner listen to the voice of truth than be led astray by the vain pretensions of the self-wise.

“The error I speak of is the definition of the word ‘Mormon.’ It has been stated that this word was derived from the Greek word *mormo*. This is not the case. There was no Greek or Latin upon the plates from which I, through the grace of the Lord, translated the Book of Mormon. . . .

“The word Mormon, means literally, more good” (in *History of the Church*, 5:399–400).

Mormon 1:2–6. The Early Life of Mormon

“Mormon does not provide us with very much information concerning his boyhood, but the scanty details he does provide indicate:

“1. He was born probably in A.D. 310 or 311. (He was about ten years of age in A.D. 321—see 4 Nephi 48 and Mormon 1:2.)

“2. He was a descendant of Nephi. (Mormon 1:5.)

“3. His father’s name was Mormon, and he was named after the land of Mormon. (Mormon 1:5 and 3 Nephi 5:12.)

“4. He was evidently born in the land northward. (Mormon 1:2, 6.)

“5. At the age of fifteen he was ‘visited of the Lord.’ (Mormon 1:15.)

“6. Despite his testimony of the divinity of Christ, he was ‘forbidden’ to preach repentance unto the wicked people. (Mormon 1:16.)

“7. In his ‘sixteenth year’ he was appointed leader of the Nephite armies, and he and his armies defended the Nephites from the Lamanites. (Mormon 2:2.)” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 298).

Mormon 1:7–14. Downfall of the Nephite Nation

In detailing the commencement of the wars that led to the downfall of the Nephite nation, what did Mormon write about the spiritual condition of the Nephites and Lamanites? (see Mormon 1:13–14).

Mormon 2:10–15. “The Day of Grace”

When the Nephites discovered that they could no longer prevail against their enemies, “there began to be a mourning and a lamentation in all the land” (Mormon 2:11). Mormon, thinking his people were about to repent, took heart only to discover that “their sorrowing was not unto repentance, . . . but . . . rather the sorrowing of the damned” (v. 13). The people were beyond the state where they would repent. As Samuel said to the Nephites of an earlier day: “Your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure” (Helaman 13:38).

True repentance involves a proper sorrow for sins. A person can be sorry for the wrong reason. He can be sorry that he was caught and punished. He can regret his actions because they caused a loss of reputation. Or, like the Nephites, he can be sorry because his actions brought misery upon himself. However, such sorrow does not constitute true repentance.

When the Apostle Paul heard of some grievous sins being tolerated in the Church in Corinth, he wrote a sharp letter of reproof (see 1 Corinthians 5). Later word came back that the Saints had taken Paul’s letter in the proper spirit, and they had repented. Pleased, Paul wrote:

“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry

after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Corinthians 7:9–10).

Godly sorrow is the recognition that in sinning we have offended God and put our souls in jeopardy of spiritual death. Any other kind of sorrow is of the world and will not lead us to repentance. The sacrifice required of all Saints is that of “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20, D&C 59:8). Such a state of heart and mind is arrived at only through godly sorrow.

Mormon 2:17–18. The Abridgment of Mormon’s Record

“When Ammaron turned the responsibility of the records over to Mormon, he indicated that Mormon should ‘engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that [he] had observed concerning his people.’ (Mormon 1:4.) Thus Mormon’s major record of the events of his day was written on the large plates of Nephi. However, later in his life he was commanded by the Lord to make a separate set of plates, the plates of Mormon. He then abridged onto his own plates all of the writings from the large plates of Nephi, including his own writings. Concerning his writings on these two sets of plates, Mormon said: ‘And upon the plates of Nephi I did make a full account of all the wickedness and abominations; but upon these plates [the plates of Mormon] I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness and abominations. . . .’ (Mormon 2:18.)

“Earlier in his writings, Mormon indicated he did not write on the plates of Mormon even one hundredth part of the things that were written on the large plates of Nephi. (3 Nephi 26:6–8.)” (Ludlow, *Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 299–300).

Mormon 2:19. “The More Sure Word of Prophecy”

We should strive to make our calling and election sure; that is, to so live that we receive assurance from the Lord that when this life is over we shall be exalted and dwell with him. Mormon received this blessing, as did other Nephite prophets (see Enos 1:27, Mosiah 26:20, 3 Nephi 28:3). Regarding his calling and election, Mormon said, “I know that I shall be lifted up at the last day” (Mormon 2:19).

Mormon 2:20–27. Aroused “Somewhat to Vigor”

How did Mormon arouse the Nephites “somewhat to vigor” (Mormon 2:24) so they could withstand the Lamanites? What sad comment did Mormon make regarding his people’s strength? (see v. 26).

Mormon 3. A Tactical Mistake

When the Nephites “began to boast in their own strength, and began to swear before the heavens that they would avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren who had been slain by their enemies” (Mormon 3:9), Mormon refused to command them anymore. Like Ether of an earlier day (see Ether 13:14, 15:33), Mormon began to “stand as an idle witness to manifest unto the world the things which [he] saw and heard” (Mormon 3:16). He had led the Nephites and had loved them, and had prayed earnestly for them “all the day long” (v. 12), but he refused to follow them into even greater wickedness.

Self-defense and vengeance are not the same. The Lord sometimes justifies his people in fighting to defend their homes and families from attack, but he does not justify offensive war. The Lord said, “Vengeance is mine, and I will repay” (v. 15). It is God who deals out retribution unto men. In taking the offensive, the Nephites went off to battle without the sanction of the Lord (see Mormon 4:4), which resulted in the eventual destruction of an entire nation.

Though Mormon couldn’t teach his people because of the hardness of their hearts, he tried to teach future readers to learn from history and avoid the terrible mistakes his people had made (see Mormon 3:17–22).

Mormon 4. A War of Vengeance

In a war of vengeance such as that described in Mormon 4, men lose the Spirit of the Lord in their thirst for bloody retribution. Mormon recorded seeing a “horrible scene of . . . blood and carnage . . . ; and every heart was hardened, so that they delighted in the shedding of blood continually” (v. 11). This spirit promoted such wickedness never before found “among all the children of Lehi, nor even among all the house of Israel, according to the words of the Lord” (v. 12).

“Now if a nation essays to go forth against another nation for the purpose of conquest, to gain territory, to grasp something that does not belong to that nation, then the nation thus assailed has the right to resist even to the shedding of blood, as it was in this land in the war for independence. But we have to be careful as to what spirit we are guided by. . . . We Latter-day Saints

must watch ourselves and not give way to passion and desire to shed blood and to destroy, for that is the power of the evil one. . . .

“. . . There is a very great difference between arising to go forth for conquest, for blood, for plunder, to gain territory and power in the earth, and in fighting to defend our own possessions in the spirit of justice and righteousness and equity, and standing up like men for those things that we have a right to contend for” (Charles W. Penrose, in Conference Report, Apr. 1917, pp. 21–22).

Mormon explained how the wicked are punished—the Lord merely withdraws and leaves the people to themselves, and the wicked punish one another (see Mormon 2:26, 4:5). Compare this with the prophetic comments in 1 Nephi 2:23 and Leviticus 26:25.

Mormon 5:1–2. Never Cease to Labor

“In this crucible of wickedness the true greatness of Mormon shines like a star as he calls his son to action, telling him that no matter how bad things are, we must never stop trying to do what we can to improve matters, ‘for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay.’ (Moroni 9:6.) In this spirit Mormon took over command of the army even when he knew that all was lost, ‘. . . for they looked upon me as though I could deliver them from their afflictions. But behold, I was without hope. . . .’ (Mormon 5:1f.) His is the predicament of the true tragic hero: ‘. . . I had led them notwithstanding their wickedness . . . and had loved them . . . with all my heart; and my soul had been poured out in prayer unto my God all the day long for them; nevertheless, it was without faith, because of the hardness of their hearts.’ (Mormon 3:12.) However it might appeal to our own age of violence, Mormon found little consolation in the fact that his people were wonderfully tough and proud of it—‘for so exceedingly do they anger that it seemeth to me that they have no fear of death.’ (Moroni 9:5.) ‘. . . they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for their lives without calling upon that Being who created them.’ (Mormon 5:2.) They could take care of themselves, thank you—and they did” (Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World*, pp. 437–38).

Mormon 5:1–18. The Final Stages of the Downfall

Mormon, like Captain Moroni, had no joy and found no glory in war. What do you think would have influenced Mormon to “repent” (Mormon 5:1) of his oath and assume command of the Nephite armies once again? Did he have any hope of victory? (see v. 2). Why not?

Mormon knew his record would come forth in the latter days (see v. 13). What did he say are the general purposes for the record’s latter-day appearance? (see vv. 14–15). Compare Mormon’s intentions with those of Moroni as recorded on the title page of the Book of Mormon.

Hugh W. Nibley adds the following possible insight into what the Nephite society may have been like at this time:

“The Nephites foolishly took the offensive and as a result lost both the land and the city of Desolation, ‘And the remainder did flee and join the inhabitants of the city of Teancum. . . .’ (Morm. 4:3) This makes it clear that we are still reading only of Mormon’s band of Nephites, and not a history of the whole nation, for the people of Teancum, which was ‘. . . in the borders by the seashore . . . near the city Desolation’ (Morm. 4:3) had up to then taken no part in the fighting. It must always be borne in mind that by this time the Nephite people had become broken up into ‘tribes,’ each living by itself and following its own tribal laws. (Hel. 7:2–4, 11.) So what Mormon gives us is only a sampling of the sort of thing that was going on. . . .

“. . . Here you have a clear picture of Nephite society. Separate ‘lands’ living their own lives, now in this last crisis terribly reluctant to move and join the swelling host in the retreat to the north. Those who refused to pull up stakes were one by one completely wiped out by the Lamanites. This was no planned migration but a forced evacuation, like dozens of such we read about in the grim and terrible times of the ‘Invasion of the Barbarians’ that destroyed the classic civilizations of the Old World. In this case Mormon’s people were only part of the general and gradual evacuation of the whole land” (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, pp. 361–62).

Points to Ponder

- While there were no miracles among the people as a whole during this time, there were righteous individuals, Mormon being one (see Mormon 1:14–15). This suggests that no environment can become so corrupt that a private individual cannot have the sweet influence of the Holy Ghost. Yet, this divine influence could not benefit those around Mormon “because of the hardness of their hearts” (v. 17).
- To receive a better understanding of the “idol gods” of the Lamanites (Mormon 4:14), look up the word *idol* in the Bible Dictionary. Review the list of references found under the word *idolatry* in the Topical Guide. You should be able to get a feeling for the great concern the prophets have had over this terrible practice, and how frequently it was a problem among the children of Israel.

Chapter 47

Mormon 6–9

Introduction

Moroni saw us! Modern man does not see himself as well as Moroni was able to through the power of God. Moroni also saw a “sword of vengeance” (Mormon 8:41) hanging over our civilization as well as over his own.

Notes and Commentary

Mormon 6:10–22. A Scene of Horror

In Mormon 6:10–15, Mormon recorded the number of dead in terms of his military leaders, each of whom commanded ten thousand men. What was the minimum number of people killed? The scene of carnage must have been one of inexpressible horror. What one thing could have prevented “this great destruction”? (v. 22).

Mormon’s lament as he viewed the slaughtered dead “from the top of the hill Cumorah” (v. 11) is one of those beautiful and moving pieces of literature found so often written by inspired men of God.

Mormon 7:1–2. Descendants of Great Book of Mormon Leaders

Mormon, knowing that his words would come forth in the last days, gave a special message to the Lamanites of our day. He called these people “the remnant of this people who are spared, . . . yea, . . . [a] remnant of the house of Israel” (Mormon 7:1). The Lamanites of today are descendants of great Book of Mormon leaders. They are, therefore, of the house of Israel. The following chart illustrates this point:

Mormon 7:8–10. The Purpose of the Book of Mormon

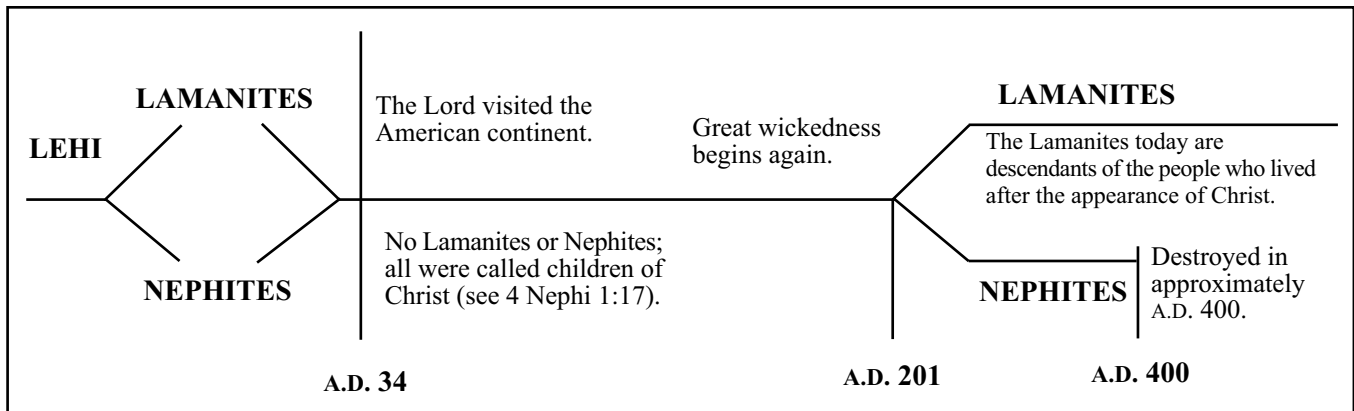
Mormon said the Book of Mormon would help the Lamanites know about their fathers and of the marvelous works wrought among them, know that they are of the house of Israel, and know that if they believe in Christ, are baptized with water and the Spirit, and follow the Lord, they may inherit eternal life (see Mormon 7:9–10).

“Here Mormon says that one of the major purposes of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is to testify of the Bible, and he also states that if we honestly accept one of these scriptures, we will accept the other, for the two scriptures testify of each other. This is also the testimony of Brigham Young:

“No man can say that this book (laying his hands on the Bible) is true . . . and at the same time say that the Book of Mormon is untrue; . . . There is not that person on the face of the earth who has had the privilege of learning the Gospel of Jesus Christ from these two books, that can say that one is true, and the other is false. No Latter-day Saint, no man or woman, can say the Book of Mormon is true, and at the same time say that the Bible is untrue. If one be true, both are.’ (*Journal of Discourses*, 1:38.)” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 344).

Mormon 8:12–25. The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon

The promise given by Moroni in Mormon 8:12 was also given by the Savior (see 3 Nephi 26:9–10). What must we do to receive “the greater things”? (v. 9).



The Lord's commandment that no one was to use the plates to get gain was fulfilled in the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. During his third appearance Moroni told Joseph that Satan would tempt Joseph to use the plates "for the purpose of getting rich" (Joseph Smith—History 1:46). Later, when Joseph went to the hill to obtain the plates, he was beset by conflicting emotions. The adversary sorely tempted him to desire the plates to relieve his family's poor financial situation. When the Prophet attempted to get the plates he was forbidden to do so because, as Moroni stated, "You have not kept the commandments of the Lord" (in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, p. 49). This lesson had a lasting impression on Joseph Smith as he more clearly saw how Satan was determined to stop the coming forth of this sacred record.

We do not have exhaustive information as to how the Book of Mormon was translated. Moroni tells us in Mormon 8:16 that it would be translated "by the power of God." The Lord gave this same explanation when he said he gave Joseph Smith "power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon" (D&C 20:8). Joseph Smith said, "Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God" (*History of the Church*, 4:537).

In Mormon 8:17 Moroni assured us that if there were faults in this record, they were the faults of men. Nephi said the same thing in 2 Nephi 33:1, 11. In each of these examples, the faults or weaknesses were in reference to the author's perceived inability to communicate in writing as fully as they would have liked to (see Ether 12:23–25).

What was the covenant in Mormon 8:23–25 that Moroni said the Lord would remember? (see Enos 1:16; D&C 10:46).

Mormon 8:35. "Written for Us Today"

"The Book of Mormon was written for us today. God is the author of the book. It is a record of a fallen people, compiled by inspired men for our blessing today. Those people never had the book—it was meant for us. Mormon, the ancient prophet after whom the book is named, abridged centuries of records. God, who knows the end from the beginning, told him what to include in his abridgment that we would need for our day. Mormon turned the records over to his son Moroni, the last recorder; and Moroni, writing over 1,500 years ago but speaking to us today, states: 'Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and

yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.' (Morm. 8:35.) . . .

"As we read and teach, we are to liken the Book of Mormon scriptures unto us 'that it might be for our profit and learning.' (1 Ne. 19:23.)" (Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, pp. 94–95; or *Ensign*, May 1975, pp. 63–64).

Mormon 9:1–6. Miserable in God's Presence

"There can be no salvation without repentance. A man cannot enter into the kingdom of God in his sins. It would be a very inconsistent thing for a man to come into the presence of the Father and to dwell in God's presence in his sins. . . .

"I think there are a great many people upon the earth, many of them perhaps in the Church—at least some in the Church—who have an idea they can go through this life doing as they please, violating the commandments of the Lord and yet eventually they are going to come into his presence. They think they are going to repent, perhaps in the spirit world.

"They ought to read these words of Moroni: 'Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him [Christ] under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws?'" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:195–96).

Mormon 9:7–26. "A God of Miracles"

Note the evidence Moroni gave that bears witness to the miracles of God—the creation of heaven and earth (see Mormon 9:17), the creation of man (see v. 17), and the scriptural testimonies of the miracles of Jesus and the Apostles (see v. 18).

According to Moroni, why does God cease to perform miracles among men? (see v. 20).

Mormon 9:27–31. Moroni's Counsel to Latter-day Readers

Moroni closed his father's record with the following counsel to latter-day readers:

1. "Doubt not, but be believing" (Mormon 9:27).
2. "Come unto the Lord with all your heart" (v. 27).
3. "Strip yourselves of all uncleanness" (v. 28).
4. Pray for the strength to "yield to no temptation" (v. 28).

5. Do not be baptized unworthily (see v. 29).
6. Do not partake of the sacrament unworthily (see v. 29).
7. “Endure to the end” (v. 29).

Mormon 9:32–37. A Version of the Hebrew Language

“Moroni’s statement in Mormon 9:32–34 pertains to the plates of Mormon and does not necessarily pertain to the small plates of Nephi from which we get the first 132 pages in our present Book of Mormon. Concerning the script of the plates of Mormon, Moroni says: ‘. . . we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.’ (Mormon 9:32.) He seems to indicate in the following verse that the Nephites are still speaking a version of Hebrew, for he admits that ‘if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also.’ (Mormon 9:33.)” (Ludlow, *Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 307).

Mormon 9:36. A “Restoration to the Knowledge of Christ”

In 1845 the Quorum of the Twelve issued a proclamation dealing in part with the restoration of the Lamanites to the knowledge of Christ:

“He [the righteous Lamanite] shall then be ordained, washed, anointed with holy oil, and arrayed in fine linen, even in the glorious and beautiful garments and royal robes of the high priesthood, which is after the order of the Son of God; and shall enter into the congregation of the Lord, even into the Holy of Holies, there to be crowned with authority and power which shall never end.

“The Spirit of the Lord shall then descend upon him, like the dew upon the mountains of Hermon, and like refreshing showers of rain upon the flowers of Paradise.

“His heart shall expand with knowledge, wide as eternity; and his mind shall comprehend the vast creations of his God, and His eternal purpose of redemption, glory, and exaltation, which was devised in heaven before the worlds were organized; but made manifest in these last days, for the fulness of the Gentiles, and for the exaltation of Israel.

“He shall also behold his Redeemer and be filled with his presence, while the cloud of his glory shall be

seen in his temple” (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1:260).

Points to Ponder

- What is Mormon mourning in Mormon 6:16–22? Is it simply death? Death itself is part of God’s plan and can be a blessing (see 2 Nephi 9:6, Alma 24, 26, D&C 42:46).

If the people of Ammon did not “look upon death with any degree of terror” (Alma 27:28) because of their hope in Christ and the resurrection, neither would Mormon. The people of Mormon were, however, justifiably terrified by death (see Mormon 6:7). Why? (see Alma 28:11, D&C 42:47).

- In Mormon 9:3–5, Moroni taught of a punishment inflicted upon us by a consciousness of our guilt. Ironically, those who will suffer so terribly on the Judgment Day will in many cases be the arrogant who seemed so poised and self-assured during their mortal probation. In verse 6, Moroni pled with the people to “cry mightily” unto God (not a very arrogant thing to do) that they might become pure before the Judgment Day.

- Moroni revealed two kinds of certainty that comprise faith.

First, Moroni said that miracles cease when people “know not the God in whom they should trust” (Mormon 9:20). Trust in God is essential to developing strong faith. This is not just a general trust. It is a personal trust in the Father and in his Son. The first principle of the gospel is to trust the Redeemer—his power and kindness, his laws and revelations, his wisdom and plans, his servants and the Church, and his victory over death and hell. Look up *Trust in God* in the Topical Guide, and find passages that focus on this ingredient of faith. How can you strengthen your trust in the Lord to the point of “doubting nothing”? (v. 21).

Second, Moroni said that our “firmness” (v. 28) needs to go beyond a simple belief in Christ to a resolve that we “will yield to no temptation” (v. 28). Moroni also said that we should “see that [we] do all things in worthiness” (v. 29); therefore, another key to having strong faith is being fully resolved to be worthy. If we want to measure our faith, we can ask ourselves if we are firmly determined to be absolutely worthy.

Chapter 48

Ether 1–5

Introduction

Perhaps no man with greater faith than that of the brother of Jared has ever walked the earth. As you study his life, you will learn of the blessings that come when such remarkable faith is exhibited.

Notes and Commentary

Ether 1:3–32. The Jaredite History

The treasures Lehi found in the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 5:10–14) are paralleled in the book of Ether. The genealogy is included in the book of Ether in typical fashion of the ancients. Notice, however, that there seems to be gaps in the father-son lineages (“descendant” is used instead of “son” in Ether 1:6, 16, 23). Even then, there are at least thirty generations recorded. If we take forty years as a rough estimate of a generation, then the Jaredite history spanned at least twelve hundred years, perhaps many more, since some people after the Flood lived longer than we think of as normal today, and also because of the missing generations. We know that the Jaredite colony came to the promised land after the Flood, somewhere around 2200–2100 B.C., and existed for at least some time after the Lehi colony arrived, 600 B.C. and later. Thus they probably lived here at least fifteen hundred years.

Ether 1:34. The Name of the Brother of Jared

The actual name of the brother of Jared is not given in the scriptures. However, George Reynolds relates the following account which indicates that the brother of Jared’s name was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

“While residing in Kirtland Elder Reynolds Cahoon had a son born to him. One day when President Joseph Smith was passing his door he called the Prophet in and asked him to bless and name the baby. Joseph did so and gave the boy the name of Mahonri Moriancumer. When he had finished the blessing he laid the child on the bed, and turning to Elder Cahoon he said, the name I have given your son is the name of the brother of Jared; the Lord has just shown [or revealed] it to me. Elder William F. Cahoon, who was standing near heard the Prophet make this statement to his father; and this was the first time the name of the brother of Jared was known in the

Church in this dispensation” (“The Jaredites,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 May 1892, p. 282 n.).

Ether 2:1–12. A Promised Land

Compare Ether 2:1–12 to 1 Nephi 17:36–38. The promise found in these verses holds true of those nations that presently inhabit North and South America. Either the people serve the God of the land or they too will eventually be swept off by the judgments of the Lord (see Ether 2:10–12).

Ether 2:7–10. An Example of the Fulfillment of Scripture

President Marion G. Romney shared an experience he had which relates to the Lord’s promise in Ether 2:10:

“In the western part of the state of New York near Palmyra is a prominent hill known as the ‘hill Cumorah.’ (Morm. 6:6.) On July twenty-fifth of this year, as I stood on the crest of that hill admiring with awe the breathtaking panorama which stretched out before me on every hand, my mind reverted to the events which occurred in that vicinity some twenty-five centuries ago—events which brought to an end the great Jaredite nation.

“You who are acquainted with the Book of Mormon will recall that during the final campaign of the fratricidal war between the armies led by Shiz and those led by Coriantumr ‘nearly two millions’ of Coriantumr’s people had been slain by the sword; ‘two millions of mighty men, and also their wives and their children.’ (Eth. 15:2.)

“As the conflict intensified, all the people who had not been slain—men ‘with their wives and their children’ (Eth. 15:15)—gathered about that hill Cumorah (see Eth. 15:11). . . .

“Thus perished at the foot of Cumorah the remnant of the once mighty Jaredite nation, of whom the Lord had said, ‘There shall be none greater . . . upon all the face of the earth.’ (Eth. 1:43.)

“As I contemplated this tragic scene from the crest of Cumorah and viewed the beautiful land of the Restoration as it appears today, I cried in my soul, ‘How could it have happened?’

“The answer came immediately as I remembered that some fifteen to twenty centuries before their destruction, as the small group of their ancestors was being divinely led from the tower of Babel, the Lord ‘would that they should come forth even unto [this] land of promise, which was choice above all other lands, which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people. . . .’ (Eth. 2:7–10.)

“Pursuant to this decree concerning the land of America, the Jaredites were swept off in the manner we have reviewed, because, rebelling against the laws of Jesus Christ—the God of the land—they ‘ripened in iniquity.’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, pp. 51–53; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, pp. 35–36).

Ether 2:16–25. A Description of the Barges

“This unparalleled book should intrigue navigators: unprecedented land treks near-unbelievable in length, scope, and hazard are chronicled and ocean crossings, and the circling of the world centuries before the Vikings—crossings fraught with all the dangers imaginable, including storms, hidden reefs, hurricanes, and even mutiny. This first recorded ocean crossing was about forty centuries ago, of seaworthy, ocean going vessels without known sails, engines, oars, or rudders—eight barges like and near contemporary with Noah’s ark, long as a tree, tight as a dish, peaked at the end like a gravy boat, (see Ether 2:17) corked at top and bottom, illuminated by molten stones (see *ibid.*, 2:20, 3:1 ff.), perhaps with radium or some other substance not yet rediscovered by our scientists. Light and like a fowl upon the water, this fleet of barges was driven by winds and ocean currents, landing at a common point in North America probably on the west shores” (Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1963, pp. 63–64).

Ether 2:23. “How to Receive a Blessing from God”

Elder Harold B. Lee applied the experience of the brother of Jared to our own lives:

“The Lord gave to the brother of Jared, that great prophet, a blueprint of the ships that he was to construct, by which he was to take his people across large bodies of water to a promised land. As he surveyed these and began to build, he faced two problems: (1) no provision was made for ventilation and (2) there was no light. The ventilation problem was solved rather simply by having holes at proper places that could be opened and closed; but the matter of light was one that he could not quite solve. So the brother of Jared cried to the Lord, saying, ‘. . . behold,

I have done even as thou hast commanded me; and I have prepared the vessels for my people, and behold there is no light in them. Behold, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that we shall cross this great water in darkness?’ (Eth. 2:22.)

“Notice how the Lord dealt with this question. He said to the brother of Jared, ‘What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels?’ (Eth. 2:23.)—as much as to say, ‘Well, have you any good ideas? What would you suggest that we should do in order to have light?’ And then the Lord said, ‘For behold, ye cannot have windows, for they will be dashed to pieces; neither shall ye take fire with you, for ye shall not go by the light of fire.

“‘For behold, you shall be as a whale in the midst of the sea; for the mountain waves shall dash upon you. Nevertheless, I will bring you up again out of the depths of the sea; for the winds have gone forth out of my mouth, and also the rains and the floods have I sent forth.’ (Eth. 2:23–24.)

“Then the Lord went away and left him alone. It was as though the Lord were saying to him, ‘Look, I gave you a mind to think with, and I gave you agency to use it. Now you do all you can to help yourself with this problem; and then, after you’ve done all you can, I’ll step in to help you.’

“The brother of Jared did some thinking. Then he gathered up sixteen stones, molten out of rock, and carried them in his hands to the top of the mount called Shelam, where he cried unto the Lord, ‘O Lord, thou hast said that we must be encompassed about by the floods. Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have been evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires.’ (Eth. 3:2.)

“Now, what is he doing? He is confessing his sins before he asks again. He has come to the conclusion that before he is worthy to seek a blessing he must keep the basic laws upon which the blessings he seeks are predicated.

“Then he says, ‘Behold, O Lord, [I know that] thou hast smitten us because of our iniquity, and hast driven us forth, and for these many years we have been in the wilderness; nevertheless, thou hast been merciful to us. O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn

away thine anger from this thy people. . . .’ (Eth. 3:3.) The brother of Jared is confessing the sins of the people, because the blessing he wants is not just for himself; it is for his whole people. Having done all that he knew how to do, he came again with a specific request and said: [Eth. 3:4–6.]

“This is the principle in action. If you want the blessing, don’t just kneel down and pray about it. Prepare yourselves in every conceivable way you can in order to make yourselves worthy to receive the blessing you seek” (“How to Receive a Blessing from God,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1966, pp. 862–63, 896).

Ether 3:1–5. Faith That the Stones Could Illuminate the Barges

The prayer of the brother of Jared shows that he possessed a sound understanding of the character and attributes of God. One of the attributes that the brother of Jared mentions is that God “hast all power” (Ether 3:4). It may have been the brother of Jared’s faith in this attribute of God that enabled him to ask God to illuminate the stones. Nephi, the son of Lehi, possessed a similar understanding which increased his faith that God could deliver the brass plates into his hands (see 1 Nephi 4:1–3).

Ether 3:6–21. The Lord’s Appearance unto the Brother of Jared

In Ether 3:15 the Lord informed the brother of Jared, “Never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast.” President Joseph Fielding Smith offers the following explanation for this passage:

“It is true that the Savior appeared to the prophets before the flood, but it is evident that he did not reveal himself in the fulness as he did to the Brother of Jared. Talking ‘face to face,’ as stated in this revelation, does not mean that the Lord did not appear in a cloud; or, that his body was partially hidden from the view of the prophet. All of this could occur and yet the Lord still be partially, if not completely, hidden from the prophet’s view. The great difference rests in this, which the conversation of the Lord with the Brother of Jared clearly indicates: The Savior was conversing with the Brother of Jared in person, yes, evidently face to face, yet the Lord was hidden by a veil. The Brother of Jared knew that the Lord was there, but evidently he did not understand that the Lord had a body apparently of flesh and bones. Through his great faith he was able to see the finger of the Lord when the Lord touched the stones. So astonished did the prophet become that

he fell to the earth in fright, fearing that the Lord might strike him. Receiving the assurance that all was well the following conversation occurred:

““And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?

““And he answered: Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me.

““And the Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak?

““And he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie.’ [Ether 3:9–12.]

“Then the Lord revealed to him his entire body, and then he said:

““And never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

““Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh.’ [Ether 3:15–16.]

“So the Savior showed to the Brother of Jared his entire body just as it would appear when he dwelt among men in the flesh.

“It is a reasonable conclusion for us to reach, and fully in accordance with the facts, that the Lord had never before revealed himself so completely and in such a manner. We may truly believe that very few of the ancient prophets at any time actually beheld the full person of the Lord” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:124–25).

Ether 3:21–28. Two Stones Possessed by King Mosiah

“King Mosiah possessed ‘two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow,’ called by the Nephites *Interpreters*, with which he translated the Jaredite record, and these were handed down from generation to generation for the purposes of interpreting languages. How Mosiah came into possession of these two stones or Urim and Thummim

the record does not tell us, more than to say that it was a ‘gift from God.’ [Mosiah 21:28.] Mosiah had this gift or Urim and Thummim before the people of Limhi discovered the record of Ether. They may have been received when the ‘large stone’ was brought to Mosiah with engravings upon it, which he interpreted by the ‘gift and power of God.’ [Omni 1:20–21.] They may have been given to him, or to some other prophet before his day, just as the Brother of Jared received them—from the Lord.

“That the Urim and Thummim, or two stones, given to the Brother of Jared were those in the possession of Mosiah appears evident from Book of Mormon teachings. The Brother of Jared was commanded to seal up his writings of the vision he had when Christ appeared to him, so that they could not be read by his people. This vision was recorded in a language which was confounded, for it was not to go forth until after the resurrection of Christ. The Urim and Thummim were also sealed up so that they could not be used for the purpose of interpreting those sacred writings of this vision, until such time as the Lord should grant to man to interpret them. When they were to be revealed, they were to be interpreted by the aid of the same Urim and Thummim. [Ether 3:21–28.]” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:223–24).

Ether 4:16. The Revelation of John the Revelator

The brother of Jared and Nephi, the son of Lehi, were both given foreknowledge of the book of Revelation found in our present Bible (see Ether 4:16, 1 Nephi 14:18–28). The sealed portion of the gold plates evidently describes the same general things and thus will help us more fully understand John’s revelation (see 2 Nephi 27:7).

Ether 5. An Address to Joseph Smith

Moroni possessed “the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim” (D&C 27:5). In Ether 5 Moroni addresses the prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith, even though nearly sixteen centuries would elapse before Joseph Smith would read his words.

Ether 5:2–4. “In the Mouth of Three Witnesses”

“In the course of the work of translation, we ascertained that three special witnesses were to be provided by the Lord, to whom He would grant that they should see the plates from which this work (the Book of Mormon) should be translated; and that these witnesses should bear record of the same, as will be found recorded, . . . [Book of Ether, chapter 5,

verses 2, 3 and 4 . . .], . . . [II Nephi, chapter 11, verse 3 . . .]. Almost immediately after we had made this discovery, it occurred to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and the aforementioned Martin Harris (who had come to inquire after our progress in the work) that they would have me inquire of the Lord to know if they might not obtain of him the privilege to be these three special witnesses; and finally they became so very solicitous, and urged me so much to inquire that at length I complied; and through the Urim and Thummim, I obtained of the Lord for them [the revelation recorded in D&C 17]” (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:52–53).

Points to Ponder

- Why do you think Moroni included his abridgment of the Jaredite writings in his record? (see Mosiah 28:17–18).
- What does the sealed portion of the gold plates contain? (see Ether 4:4–5, 2 Nephi 27:7).
- When will we have access to the teachings from the sealed portion of the plates? (see Ether 4:6–7).

Chapter 49

Ether 6–10

Introduction

In all our study of mankind, we have never found Satan resting. Among the Jaredites we find his influence as determined and vicious as at any other time.

Notes and Commentary

Ether 6:19–30. Why Is It Dangerous for a People to Seek a King?

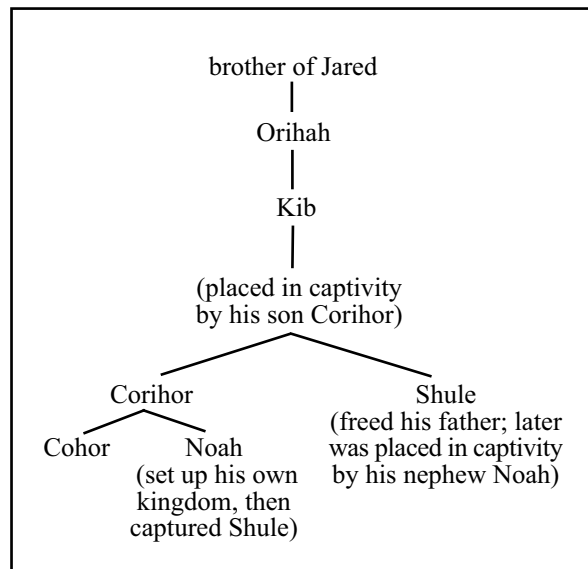
The people of Israel, like the people of Jared, suddenly wanted to change to a monarchical form of government. The prophet Samuel, who was the judge or ruler over Israel, was saddened by his people’s request. But the Lord revealed the real problem when he told Samuel, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:7). Then the Lord told Samuel to give in to their request after warning them of the consequences of their wishes (see v. 9).

When the Jaredites wanted a king, the brother of Jared warned them: “Surely this thing leadeth into captivity” (Ether 6:23). King Mosiah also commented on the potential dangers of kings (see Mosiah 29:16–24).

Ether 7. From King to Captivity

The brother of Jared said that having a king would lead to captivity, and he was right. Kib, and later his son Shule, were taken captive by rivals. The following genealogical chart illustrates this part of the early Jaredite history. Notice how short the time was between the brother of Jared’s prophecy and its fulfillment.

Much Jaredite history is covered rapidly in this part of the book of Ether. In abridging the history, Moroni told only the highlights of hundreds of years of events. He emphasized the parallels with his own people and the lessons that would be most valuable for our time.



Ether 8:1–12. Secret Combinations Among the Jaredites

Moroni paused in his rapid summary of Jaredite history to recount in great detail the instituting of secret combinations among these people. Moroni did so because these organizations caused the entire downfall of both the Jaredite and the Nephite societies (see Ether 8:21); and unless we repent, secret combinations will cause the downfall of society in our own time (see vv. 23–25).

Verse 9 indicates that the Jaredites learned about secret combinations from records that their fathers had brought with them from the old world. It is possible these records contained an account of the earliest secret combinations (see Moses 5:29–33, 47–55), for we know that the Jaredites had records of the “creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower” (Ether 1:3).

The plan by which Jared’s daughter proposed to help secure the kingdom for her father indicates how evil persons can take advantage of human weakness. Jared’s daughter was well aware of her personal beauty, as well as Akish’s desire for her. In her anxiety to help her father get power and gain she was willing to participate in an evil plot.

Ether 8:13–17. An Unrighteous and Binding Oath

Notice that Akish, in binding his supporters to be faithful to him in all that he desired, compelled them to

swear unto him “by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens” (Ether 8:14). In this way Akish invested his evil work with a sort of moral sanctity. This oath is precisely what Satan demanded of Cain in making the original secret combination: “Swear unto me,” said Satan, “by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and by the living God” (Moses 5:29).

“When the Jaredite Akish seeking to seize the throne, administered the oath to his supporters with fair promises, it was not by the devil but ‘by the God of heaven’ that they swore. (Ether 8:13–17.) But God did not approve, ‘for the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, even as they of old; which combination is most abominable and wicked above all in the sight of God. For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it from the beginning of man.’ (Ether 8:19.)” (Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World*, pp. 405–6).

Ether 8:18–22. The Laws of God Regarding Secret Combinations

In Ether 8:18–22 we learn four important things:

1. Secret combinations are wicked and forbidden of the Lord (see vv. 18–19).
2. Secret combinations are “had among all people” (v. 20).
3. Secret combinations “caused the destruction” of both the Jaredite and Nephite nations (v. 21).
4. Whatever nation upholds secret combinations “shall be destroyed” (v. 22).

This last item is an important point to remember—to flourish, secret combinations need the support of the people.

Ether 8:23–26. Special Warnings

Moroni said he was “commanded to write” (Ether 8:26) the things he did. As Moroni did so, three special warnings to the Gentiles emerged:

1. “Suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you” (v. 23).
2. If you allow secret combinations, “the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction” (v. 23).
3. “When ye shall see these things come among you . . . awake to a sense of your awful situation” (v. 24).

Elder Ezra Taft Benson spoke concerning Moroni’s warning:

“Joseph Smith said that the Book of Mormon was the ‘keystone of our religion’ and the ‘most correct’ book on earth. [*History of the Church*, 4:461.] This most correct book on earth states that the downfall of two great American civilizations came as a result of secret conspiracies whose desire was to overthrow the freedom of the people. ‘And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking,’ says Moroni, ‘and also the destruction of the people of Nephi.’ (Eth. 8:21.)

“Now undoubtedly Moroni could have pointed out many factors that led to the destruction of the people, but notice how he singled out the secret combinations, just as the Church today could point out many threats to peace, prosperity, and the spread of God’s work, but it has singled out the greatest threat as the godless conspiracy. There is no conspiracy theory in the Book of Mormon—it is a conspiracy fact.

“Then Moroni speaks to us in this day and says, ‘Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you. . . .’ (Eth. 8:24.)

“The Book of Mormon further warns that ‘whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold they shall be destroyed. . . .’ (Eth. 8:22.)

“This scripture should alert us to what is ahead unless we repent, because there is no question but that as people of the free world, we are increasingly upholding many of the evils of the adversary today. By court edict godless conspirators can run for government office, teach in our schools, hold office in labor unions, work in our defense plants, serve in our merchant marines, etc. As a nation, we are helping to underwrite many evil revolutionaries in our country.

“Now we are assured that the Church will remain on the earth until the Lord comes again—but at what price? The Saints in the early days were assured that Zion would be established in Jackson County, but look at what their unfaithfulness cost them in bloodshed and delay.

“President [J. Reuben] Clark [Jr.] warned us that ‘we stand in danger of losing our liberties, and that once lost, only blood will bring them back; and once

lost, we of this church will, in order to keep the Church going forward, have more sacrifices to make and more persecutions to endure than we have yet known. . . .’ [in Conference Report, Apr. 1944, p. 116.] And he stated that if the conspiracy ‘comes here it will probably come in its full vigor and there will be a lot of vacant places among those who guide and direct, not only this government, but also this Church of ours.’ [in Conference Report, Apr. 1952, p. 80.]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, p. 51; or *Ensign*, July 1972, pp. 60–61).

Ether 9. Great Prosperity and Tragic Wickedness

Moroni mentioned in Ether 9:3 that Omer and his family passed by the place where the Nephites were later destroyed. According to Mormon 6:1–2, this place was near a hill called by the Nephites the Hill Cumorah.

Notice in Ether 9:5–12 how the rise of secret combinations again led to the destruction of many people. What are the motives of those who join secret combinations?

Verses 15 through 35 show a pattern repeated many times in the Book of Mormon:

1. During the righteous reigns of Emer and Coriantum the people prospered exceedingly (see vv. 15–25).
2. Under the reign of Heth, the people began to join together in secret combinations, and they turned to wickedness (see vv. 26–27).
3. The Lord sent prophets to warn the people of their terrible circumstances (see v. 28).
4. The people of Heth rejected the prophets (see v. 29).
5. The judgments of God fell upon the people (see vv. 30–33).
6. The people humbled themselves and repented, and the Lord blessed them again with prosperity (see vv. 34–35).

Can a people be wealthy and still remain righteous? It seems that the Jaredites were able to do this for more than 225 years (see vv. 15–25). Just think of it—they lived for that long in peace and prosperity because of their righteousness. Sometimes we think that the Book of Mormon is an account of continuous war and overlook the generations of peace and righteousness.

Ether 9:18–19. Jaredite Animals

“I think it quite significant that the Book of Mormon associates elephants only with the Jaredites, since there is no apparent reason why they should not have been as common in the fifth as in the fifteenth century B.C. All we know is that they became extinct in large parts of Asia somewhere between those dates, as they did likewise in the New World, to follow the Book of Mormon, leaving only the written records of men to testify of their existence.

“‘They have plenty of iron, *accarum*, and *andanicum*,’ says Marco Polo of the people of Kobian. ‘Here they make mirrors of highly polished steel, of large size and very handsome.’ The thing to note here is not primarily the advanced state of steelworking in Central Asia, though that as we have seen is significant, but the fact that no one knows for sure what *accarum* and *andanicum* are. Marco knew, of course, but since the things didn’t exist in Europe there was no western word for them and so all he could do was to call them by their only names. It is just so with the *cureloms* and *cumoms* of Ether 9:19. These animals were unknown to the Nephites, and so Moroni leaves the words untranslated, or else though known to the Nephites, they are out of our experience so that *our* language has no name to call them by. They were simply breeds of those ‘many other kinds of animals which were useful for the food of man.’” (Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, pp. 217–18).

Ether 10:1–8. The Wickedness of the Jaredites

Ether 10:5–7 describes the reign of Riplakish. Note how his wickedness was duplicated by wicked King Noah (see Mosiah 11). Note the following characteristics of both kings:

Riplakish (Ether 10)	Characteristics	Noah (Mosiah 11)
v. 5	Very immoral	v. 2
v. 5	Taxed the people heavily	v. 3
v. 6	Built spacious buildings	v. 8
v. 7	Gluttoned himself on the work of others	v. 6
v. 8	Killed by his own people	Mosiah 19:20

Is it any wonder that Isaiah warned his people, and us as well, “For the leaders of this people cause them to err”? (Isaiah 9:16, 2 Nephi 19:16). The righteous King Mosiah later commanded his people not to have kings because “the sins of many people have been caused by the iniquities of their kings” (Mosiah 29:31).

In Ether 14:2 we are told that a man defended his “wives.” It is not known if the Lord allowed the Jaredites plural wives, but at least in the case of Riplakish we know the practice was abused.

Ether 10:9–34. A Very High State of Civilization

We read about the history of the Jaredite nation in Ether 10. Although the record is scant, it provides insight into their high state of civilization. Moroni told us the following things about the Jaredites:

1. They “were exceedingly industrious, and they did buy and sell and traffic one with another, that they might get gain” (v. 22).
2. They “did work in all manner of ore, and they did make gold, and silver, and iron, and brass, and all manner of metals. . . . And they did work all manner of fine work” (v. 23).
3. They had “silks, and fine-twined linen; and they did work all manner of cloth” (v. 24).
4. They “did make all manner of tools to till the earth, both to plow and to sow, to reap and to hoe, and also to thrash” (v. 25).
5. They “did make all manner of tools with which they did work their beasts” (v. 26).
6. They “did make all manner of weapons of war. And they did work all manner of work of exceedingly curious workmanship” (v. 27).

Moroni concluded by telling us, “And never could be a people more blessed than were they” (v. 28).

Points to Ponder

- Note the prophecy made by the brother of Jared and the number of times it was fulfilled (see Ether 6:22–23).
- What led to the destruction of the Jaredites and the people of Nephi? (see Ether 8:18–21).
- What did Moroni warn about secret combinations among us today? (see Ether 8:24).

Chapter 50

Ether 11–15

Introduction

The cycles of wickedness and calamity observed among the Nephites had also occurred among the Jaredites. It is difficult to imagine a more thorough warning to latter-day people.

Notes and Commentary

Ether 11. The Final Stages of Jaredite Civilization

As with the Nephites, the Jaredite society moved through various stages of decline. As recorded thus far in their history, the Jaredites went through a cycle of prosperity, apostasy, judgment, repentance, prosperity, and so on. But eventually, as with the Nephites, the depths of apostasy and wickedness became more and more serious.

Ether 11 contains the final stages of the Jaredite cycle of apostasy. They had earlier rejected, mocked, and reviled the prophets. Though King Shule had passed a law protecting the prophets and punishing those who persecuted them (see Ether 7:23–26), a later king made it state policy to execute the prophets (see Ether 11:5). Finally, the wickedness became so rampant that the prophets “withdrew from among the people” (v. 13).

Ether 12:6–18. Faith

President Spencer W. Kimball spoke of faith as a planting for an eternal harvest:

“Throughout the Church hundreds of thousands of faithful Saints have truly consecrated their lives and their energies to the work of the Lord, secure in the assurance that thereby they please him.

“It is a disappointment, however, to find many others who are not willing to trust the Lord—or to trust in his promise when he says, ‘Prove me and see.’ I often wonder why men cannot trust their Lord. He has promised his children every blessing contingent upon their faithfulness, but fickle man places his trust in ‘the arm of flesh’ and sets about to make his own way unaided by him who could do so much.

“The Lord has challenged us:

“... prove me . . . if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that

there shall not be room enough to receive it.’ (Malachi 3:10.)

“The prophet Moroni stopped abruptly in his abridging to offer his own inspired comments concerning the matter of faith:

“‘I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.’ (Ether 12:6.)

“Father Adam understood this basic principle:

“‘. . . an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.’ (Moses 5:6.)

“He showed his unwavering faith—and since the witness and the miracle follow rather than precede the faith, the angel then sought to enlighten him, saying:

“‘This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father. . . .’ (Moses 5:7.)

“In faith we plant the seed, and soon we see the miracle of the blossoming. Men have often misunderstood and have reversed the process. They would have the harvest before the planting, the reward before the service, the miracle before the faith. Even the most demanding labor unions would hardly ask the wages before the labor. But many of us would have the vigor without the observance of the health laws, prosperity through the opened windows of heaven without the payment of our tithes. We would have the close communion with our Father without fasting and praying; we would have rain in due season and peace in the land without observing the Sabbath and keeping the other commandments of the Lord. We would pluck the rose before planting the roots; we would harvest the grain before sowing the cultivating.

“If we could only realize, as Moroni writes:

“‘For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them. . . .

“‘And neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith; wherefore they first believed in the Son of God.’ (Ether 12:12, 18.) . . .

“The Lord made it clear that faith is not developed by miracles.

“But, behold, faith cometh not by signs, but signs follow those that believe.” (D&C 63:9.)

“To the scribes and Pharisees who demanded signs without the preliminary faith and works the Lord said:

“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. . . .” (Matthew 12:39.) . . .

“Faith is needed as much as ever before. Little can we see. We know not what the morrow will bring. Accidents, sickness, even death seem to hover over us continually. Little do we know when they might strike.

“It takes faith—unseeing faith—for young people to proceed immediately with their family responsibilities in the face of financial uncertainties. It takes faith for the young woman to bear her family instead of accepting employment, especially when schooling for the young husband is to be finished. It takes faith to observe the Sabbath when ‘time and a half’ can be had working, when profit can be made, when merchandise can be sold. It takes a great faith to pay tithes when funds are scarce and demands are great. It takes faith to fast and have family prayers and to observe the Word of Wisdom. It takes faith to do home teaching, stake missionary work, and other service, when sacrifice is required. It takes faith to fill full-time missions. But know this—that all these are of the planting, while faithful, devout families, spiritual security, peace, and eternal life are the harvest” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, pp. 3–5, 10–11).

Ether 13:1–12. The New Jerusalem

Ether 13:1–12 describes what a great seer Ether was. Ether was shown many marvelous things by the Lord, including the establishment of a New Jerusalem prior to the Second Coming. Note what Ether said about the New Jerusalem:

1. It would be “the holy sanctuary of the Lord” (v. 3).
2. It would be built on the American continent for the remnant of the seed of Joseph (see vv. 4–6).
3. It would be a holy city like the Jerusalem built unto the Lord (see vv. 8–9).
4. It would stand until the earth is celestialized (see v. 8).
5. It would be a city for the pure and righteous (see v. 10).

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote the following about the New Jerusalem:

“The prevailing notion in the world is that this [the New Jerusalem] is the city of Jerusalem, the ancient city of the Jews which in the day of regeneration will be renewed, but this is not the case. We read in the Book of Ether that the Lord revealed to him many of the same things which were seen by John. Ether, as members of the Church will know, was the last of the prophets among the Jaredites, and the Lord had revealed to him much concerning the history of the Jews and their city of Jerusalem which stood in the days of the ministry of our Savior. In his vision, in many respects similar to that given to John, Ether saw the old city of Jerusalem and also the new city which has not yet been built, and he wrote of them as follows as reported in the writings of Moroni:

[Ether 13:2–11] . . .

“In the day of regeneration, when all things are made new, there will be three great cities that will be holy. One will be the Jerusalem of old which shall be rebuilt according to the prophecy of Ezekiel. One will be the city of Zion, or of Enoch, which was taken from the earth when Enoch was translated and which will be restored; and the city Zion, or New Jerusalem, which is to be built by the seed of Joseph on this the American continent.

[Moses 7:62–64]

“After the close of the millennial reign we are informed that Satan, who was bound during the millennium, shall be loosed and go forth to deceive the nations. Then will come the end. The earth will die and be purified and receive its resurrection. During this cleansing period the City Zion, or New Jerusalem, will be taken from the earth; and when the earth is prepared for the celestial glory, the city will come down according to the prediction in the Book of Revelation” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:103–6).

Ether 13:13–31. Coriantumr

Coriantumr had devoted a great deal of time to studying “all the arts of war and all the cunning of the world” (Ether 13:16); yet he rejected the simple message of Ether which would have brought him peace in a way that all his military skills could not do.

Note the prophet Ether’s promise to Coriantumr in verses 20 and 21, as well as its fulfillment (see Ether 15:1–3, 26–32, Omni 1:20–22).

Ether 14–15. The Final Jaredite Battle

“The insane wars of the Jaredite chiefs ended in the complete annihilation of both sides, with the kings

the last to go. The same thing had almost happened earlier in the days of Akish, when a civil war between him and his sons reduced the population to thirty. . . . This all seems improbable to us, but two circumstances peculiar to Asiatic warfare explain why the phenomenon is by no means without parallel: (1) Since every war is strictly a personal contest between kings, the battle *must* continue until one of the kings falls or is taken. (2) And yet things are so arranged that the king must be very *last* to fall, the whole army existing for the sole purpose of defending his person. This is clearly seen in the game of chess, in which all pieces are expendable except the king, who can never be taken. ‘The *shah* in chess,’ writes M. E. Moghadam, ‘is *not* killed and does *not* die. The game is terminated when the *shah* is *pressed into a position from which he cannot escape*. This is in line with all good traditions of chess playing, and back of it the tradition of capturing the king in war rather than slaying him whenever that could be accomplished.’ You will recall the many instances in the book of Ether in which kings were kept in prison for many years but not killed. In the code of medieval chivalry, taken over from central Asia, the person of the king is sacred, and all others must perish in his defense. After the battle the victor may do what he will with his rival—and infinitely ingenious tortures were sometimes devised for the final reckoning—but as long as the war went on, the king could not die, for whenever he did die, the war was over, no matter how strong his surviving forces. Even so, Shiz was willing to spare *all* of Coriantumr’s subjects if he could only behead Coriantumr with his own sword. In that case, of course, the subjects would become his own. The circle of warriors, ‘large and mighty men as to the strength of men’ . . . that fought around their kings to the last man, represent that same ancient institution, the sacred ‘shieldwall,’ which our own Norse ancestors took over from Asia and which meets us again and again in the wars of the tribes, in which on more than one occasion the king actually *was* the last to perish. So let no one think the final chapter of Ether is at all fanciful or overdrawn. Wars of extermination are a standard institution in the history of Asia” (Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, pp. 235–36).

It is impossible for us to fully fathom the horror of the final Jaredite battle in which even women and children were armed and sent to war (see Ether 15:15). Here we have a graphic picture of what men become when the Spirit of the Lord withdraws and no longer strives with them (see v. 19).

Points to Ponder

- Read Ether 12:27. What purposes do weaknesses serve? How can weaknesses become strengths?
- Identify the different Jerusalems spoken of in Ether 13.
- How does the Book of Ether serve as a warning to the nations of the earth today?

Chapter 51

Moroni 1–8

Introduction

After he ended his abridgment of the Jaredite history, Moroni supposed that he was not to write any additional records. But as he had not perished yet, Moroni recorded additional sacred truths that he hoped would be of value to the Lamanites of a future day. These teachings are found in Moroni 1–8. Ponder them carefully, for they are of great worth to all of our Father’s children.

Notes and Commentary

Moroni 1. An Author and Compiler

Moroni’s work on the plates began with Mormon 8. After finishing the record of his father, Mormon, he compiled the book of Ether. While hiding from the Lamanites, Moroni wrote the book of Moroni, and in it he included a sermon and two letters from his father (see Moroni 7–9).

Moroni 2–6. The Church in Moroni’s Time

Compare Moroni 2–6 to Doctrine and Covenants 20, especially verses 54 through 55 and 68 through 79. The principles and practices of the Church were the same in the Nephite dispensation as they are today.

Moroni 3. The Role of the Holy Ghost in Ordinations

A man may properly wire his house for electricity, observing the code most carefully. Still, if the power company refuses to connect the house to the power source, the lights and heat will not function in the house. A man could turn switches on in every room, and still there would be no power source for the house. Similarly, for the priesthood to be conferred, the person doing the ordaining must have the necessary power from the Lord. And this power is conveyed to another person only when the one ordaining has permission to do so.

The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke of the role of the Holy Ghost in performing ordinations:

“We believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost being enjoyed now, as much as it was in the Apostles’ days; we believe that it [the gift of the Holy Ghost] is necessary to make and to organize the Priesthood, that no man can be called to fill any office in the ministry

without it; we also believe in prophecy, in tongues, in visions, and in revelations, in gifts, and in healings; and that these things cannot be enjoyed without the gift of the Holy Ghost” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 243).

Moroni 6:1–3. Baptism Among the Nephites

The conditions for baptism do not change from one age to another. Moroni recorded that to be baptized a person must—

1. Bring forth fruit meet for repentance (see Moroni 6:1).
2. Have “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (v. 2).
3. Witness before the Church true repentance of all sins (see v. 2).
4. Accept the name of Christ and “serve him to the end” (v. 3).

Compare this list with the requirements given in Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.

Moroni 6:4. “Wrought Upon and Cleansed”

That which is “wrought upon” is changed in some basic or essential way, usually by the means of hand tools through twisting, beating, or embellishing. In Moroni 6:4, “wrought upon” is symbolic and has reference to what occurs when the Spirit quickens and changes a convert to a new person. The atoning sacrifice of Christ makes the remission of our sins possible, but it is through the cleansing power of the Holy Ghost, the baptism of fire, that sins are actually purged or removed (see 2 Nephi 31:17, Alma 13:12, 3 Nephi 27:20).

Moroni 6:4. “The Author and the Finisher” of Our Faith

How we live matters very much. None of us, however, lives a perfect life, and so none of us can return to the presence of God by virtue of our own works. Because Christ lived a perfect life only his blood can pay for sins that have been committed. Thus, a person can begin to have faith only when he relies upon the merits of Christ; therefore, Jesus is the “author” of our faith.

After faith begins to develop, we must continue to rely on Christ’s merit, the Atonement, as we endure to

the end. And it is only through constant faith in the Redeemer and through repentance that we can endure to the end. In this sense, Jesus is the “finisher” of our faith.

From the time we accept Christ and qualify for a rebirth until we have endured to the end, we must rely “alone upon the merits of Christ, . . . the author and the finisher of [our] faith” (Moroni 6:4).

Moroni 6:5–6. Church Meetings

President Anthon H. Lund declared:

“Unless the Saints attend their meetings it will be hard for them to keep alive in the Gospel” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1907, p. 9).

Moroni 6:7–8. Treatment of Sinners in the Church

Church courts and the policies that govern these courts serve three general purposes: to protect the sacred name of the Church, to clear the name of the innocent who are falsely accused, and to provide an opportunity for the guilty to repent.

Sometimes members of the Church may look upon such actions as proof that the Church has failed in some respect. Enemies of the Church may point to examples of members who are acting unworthily as evidence that the Church is not true. Elder Boyd K. Packer gave some excellent counsel regarding this matter:

“One young man was being constantly ridiculed by his co-workers for his activity in the Church. They claimed to know of a bishop who had cheated someone in business, or a stake president who had misrepresented something on a contract, or a mission president who had borrowed money, giving false information.

“Or, they told of a bishop who had discriminated against one member, refusing to give a temple recommend, but had shown favoritism by signing a recommend for another whose unworthiness was widely known.

“Such incidents as these, which supposedly involve Church leaders, are described as evidence that the gospel is not true, that the Church is not divinely inspired, or that it is being misled.

“He had no satisfactory answer to their charges. He felt defenseless and foolish and was being drawn to join them in their criticism of the Church.

“Did he believe all of these stories? Well, he could not be sure. There must be something to some of them.

“If you also face such a test of faith, consider the questions he was asked:

“Have you ever, in your life, attended any Church meeting—priesthood meeting, sacrament meeting, Relief Society, Sunday School, a conference or fireside, a seminary class, a temple session, or any meeting sponsored by the Church—where any encouragement or authorization was given to be dishonest, to cheat in business, or take advantage of anyone?

“He answered that he had not.

“The next question:

“Have you read, or do you know of anything in the literature of the Church, in the scriptures themselves, in lesson manuals, in Church magazines or books, in Church publications of any kind, which contains any consent to lie, or to steal, to misrepresent, to defraud, to be immoral or vulgar, to profane, to be brutal, or to abuse any living soul?

“Again he said, after thoughtful consideration, that he had not.

“Have you ever been encouraged in a training session, a leadership meeting, or an interview to transgress or misbehave in any way? Have you ever been encouraged to be extreme or unreasonable or intemperate?

“He had not.

“You are inside the Church where you can see at close hand the conduct of bishops or Relief Society presidents, of high councilors, stake presidents, or General Authorities. Could such conduct be described as being typical of them?

“He thought it could not.

“You are active and have held positions in the Church. Surely, you would have noticed if the Church promoted any of these things in any way.

“Yes, he thought he would have noticed.

“Why then, I asked him, when you hear reports of this kind, should you feel that the Church is to blame?

“There is no provision in the teachings or doctrines of the Church for any member to be dishonest, or immoral, or irresponsible, or even careless.

“Have you not been taught all of your life, that if a member of the Church, particularly one in high position, is unworthy in any way, he acts against the

standards of the Church? He is not in harmony with the teachings, the doctrines, or with the leadership of the Church.

“Why, then, should your faith be shaken by this account, or that, of some alleged misconduct—most of them misrepresented or untrue? . . .

“Now, does anyone holding a responsible position in the Church ever act unworthily?”

“The answer: of course, it happens. It is an exception, but it happens.

“When we call a man to be a stake president or a bishop, for instance, we say, in effect:

“Here is a congregation. You are to preside over them. They are under constant temptation, and you are to see that they win that battle. Govern them in such a way that they can succeed. Devote yourself unselfishly to this cause.

“And, incidentally, while you preside, you are not excused from your own trials and temptations. They will, in fact, be increased because you are a leader. Win your own battle as best you can.”

“If a leader does conduct himself unworthily, his actions fly against everything the Church stands for, and he is subject to release.

“It has even been our sad responsibility, on some few occasions, to excommunicate leaders from the Church who have been guilty of very serious illegal or immoral conduct.

“That should increase, not shake, your faith in the Church, or of a nonmember toward it” (in Conference Report, Mar.–Apr. 1979, pp. 109–11; or *Ensign*, May 1979, pp. 79–80).

Moroni 7:4–11. Our Motives for Doing Righteous Things

It is possible to do the right thing for the wrong reason. For example, it is right to pay tithing or to pray. But if a person does these things to “be seen of men,” they are not counted as righteous acts. Christ taught that such persons “have their reward” when they achieve the recognition which they seek (see Matthew 6:1–8, 16–18). Elder Marion G. Romney shared the following personal experience regarding our motives for doing righteous things:

“About a quarter of a century ago Sister Romney and I moved into a ward in which they were just beginning to build a meetinghouse. The size of the contribution the bishop thought I ought to contribute

rather staggered me. I thought it was at least twice as much as he should have asked. However, I had just been called to a rather high Church position, so I couldn’t very well tell him where to go. Therefore, I said, ‘Well, I will pay it, Bishop, but I will have to pay it in installments because I don’t have the money.’ And so I began to pay. And I paid and paid until I was down to about the last three payments, when, as is my habit, I was reading The Book of Mormon, and came to the scripture which said:

“ . . . if a man . . . giveth a gift . . . grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God.’ (Moroni 7:8.)

“This shocked me because I was out about a thousand dollars. Well, I went on and paid the three installments I had promised to pay, and then I paid several more installments to convince the Lord that I had done it with the right attitude” (“Mother Eve, a Worthy Exemplar,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Feb. 1968, pp. 84–85).

Moroni 7:16–18. The Light of Christ

“We do not find this doctrine so clearly defined in the New Testament as in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon. But we discover this: The Lord has not left men (when they are born into this world) helpless, groping to find the light and truth, but every man that is born into the world is born with the right to receive the guidance, the instruction, the counsel of the Spirit of Christ, or Light of Truth, sometimes called the Spirit of the Lord in our writings.

“If a man who has never heard the gospel will hearken to the teachings and manifestations of the Spirit of Christ, or the Light of Truth, which come to him, often spoken of as conscience—every man has a conscience and knows more or less when he does wrong, and the Spirit guides him if he will hearken to its whisperings—it will lead him eventually to the fulness of the gospel. That is, he is guided by the Light, and when the gospel comes he will be ready to receive it. This is what the Lord tells us in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

“This Spirit of Truth, or Light of Christ, also has other functions. We read this in the revelation: ‘This . . . glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ, his Son—He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended

all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:51).

Moroni 7:20–26. “Lay Hold upon Every Good Thing”

Study carefully what Mormon teaches in Moroni 7:20–26, for in these verses is found one of the most important keys to righteousness. That key is faith. What makes faith possible? Mormon lists the following:

1. God’s knowledge of all things (see v. 22).
2. The ministering of angels, which is one way in which the knowledge and authority of God comes to man (see vv. 22, 25).
3. The reality of Christ (see v. 22).
4. The prophets of God (see v. 23).

All of these teach us of the goodness of Christ. This leads us to faith and prayer, which then enable us to “lay hold upon every good thing” (vv. 25–26).

Moroni 7:27–28. The Savior’s “Rights of Mercy”

Jesus atoned for men’s sins. As our Savior, it is his privilege to prescribe the means whereby we receive the benefits of his atoning act, or in other words, “to claim of the Father his rights of mercy” (Moroni 7:27).

Moroni 7:29–39. The Day of Miracles

Some churches teach that the day of miracles ended with the ministry of Jesus Christ and his apostles in Jerusalem. This is not true with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For Latter-day Saints, the day of miracles has not passed. Many still have faith and have miracles happen in their lives. As Mormon recorded in Moroni 7:37–38:

“For it is by faith that miracles are wrought; . . .

“ . . . Wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also.”

Referring to faith in Christ, Mormon said, “If ye have not faith in him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of his church” (v. 39). But how much faith is needed to qualify one for membership in the Church? Would, as Alma said, “a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe” (Alma 32:27) be enough? Mormon did not say our faith must be perfect, but spoke of a “faith in Christ because of your meekness” (Moroni 7:39). This suggests a humble trust in the Lord.

Elder M. Russell Ballard taught:

“What a priceless collection of faith-promoting experiences can be found in the scriptures! I marvel at the powerful accounts they contain:

“The aged patriarch Abraham ascending Mount Moriah with his only son Isaac.

“A young shepherd boy challenging the giant of the Philistine armies.

“Alma and Amulek imprisoned at Ammonihah.

“You and I are constantly nourished by these great examples of faith and miracles from the past.

“But what of today? As the prophet Mormon asked: ‘Has the day of miracles ceased? Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought.’ (Moroni 7:35–37.)

“Yes, faith is the key. And as I travel over the Church, I find such miracle-spawning faith to be in abundant supply. I agree with President Heber J. Grant, who said: ‘I bear my witness to you that if a record had been made of all those who have been afflicted, those who have been given up to die, and who have been healed by the power of God, since the establishment of the Church of Christ in our day, it would make a book much larger than the New Testament. More miracles have been performed in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints than we have any account of in the days of the Savior and His Apostles. Today, sickness is cured by spiritual power. . . . The dead have been raised. My own brother was announced to be dead, but by the prayer of faith he lives and presides over one of the stakes of Zion. I know, as I know I live, that the healing power of Almighty God . . . is in the Church of Christ of which you and I are members.’ (Conference Report, October 6, 1910, p. 119.)” (“Faith in the Lives of the Saints,” in *Faith*, pp. 67–68).

Moroni 7:40–43. Faith and Hope

After quoting Paul’s statement that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1), the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

“From this we learn that faith is the assurance which men have of the existence of things which they

have not seen, and the principle of action in all intelligent beings.

“. . . Faith . . . is the moving cause of all action in [intelligent beings]. . . .

“And as faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns, so it is in spiritual. . . .

“. . . But faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth. . . .

“Faith, then, is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things; by it they exist, by it they are upheld, by it they are changed, or by it they remain, agreeable to the will of God. Without it there is no power, and without power there could be no creation nor existence!” (*Lectures on Faith* 1:9–10, 12–13, 24).

Mormon pointed out that faith and hope are inextricably intertwined. If a man has true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he possesses an earnest hope or expectation that through Christ’s atonement and resurrection he, personally, may “be raised unto life eternal” (Moroni 7:41). Thus, “if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope” (v. 42).

“As used in the revelations, *hope* is the desire of faithful people to gain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God hereafter. It is not a flimsy, ethereal desire, one without assurance that the desired consummation will be received, but a desire coupled with full expectation of receiving the coveted reward. Paul, for instance, was not hesitant in affirming that he lived, ‘In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began’ (Tit. 1:2), and Peter assured all the elect that ‘by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,’ their ‘lively hope’ of ‘an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven’ for the saints, had been renewed or ‘begotten’ again. (1 Pet. 1:1–5.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 365).

Moroni 7:44–48. Charity

Charity, like faith and hope, is essential for salvation in God’s presence. Moroni wrote: “Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity” (Moroni 10:20). Moroni then declared: “And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope” (v. 21).

“Above all the attributes of godliness and perfection, *charity* is the one most devoutly to be desired. Charity is more than love, far more; it is everlasting love, perfect love, the pure love of Christ which endureth forever. It is love so centered in righteousness that the possessor has no aim or desire except for the eternal welfare of his own soul and for the souls of those around him. (2 Ne. 26:30; Moro. 7:47; 8:25–26.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 121.)

Mormon defined charity as “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47). What does this mean? Love that is pure and selfless thinks of others, acts with kindness, does not insist on victory, rejoices in truth, and is long-suffering and patient. For whoever has charity at the Judgment Day, “it shall be well with him” (v. 47).

Charity is a gift of God, and one must “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love” (v. 48). A person seeks this gift in prayer, but the gift actually comes as a bestowal by the Father “upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ” (v. 48). As a person keeps the commandments and learns to follow Jesus’ loving example of obedience, he is blessed with the gift of charity.

Moroni 8. The Baptism of Little Children

Moroni 8 is a letter Moroni received from his father, Mormon. It clarifies the issue of baptism for little children.

The ordinance of baptism is “for the remission of sins” (D&C 49:13). But little children have no sins. In fact, they are “not capable of committing sin” (Moroni 8:8), nor does the devil have power to tempt them “until they begin to become accountable” before the Lord (D&C 29:47). The Lord has set the age of accountability at eight years of age (see JST, Genesis 17:11; see also D&C 68:27). Those churches that baptize infants to remove original sin, or the “curse of Adam,” do so without scriptural authorization (see Moroni 8:8).

Moroni 8:22–24. “They That Are Without the Law”

Many persons live and die and never know the law of Christ. Such persons will hear the gospel in the spirit world and can there exercise faith and repentance. Living proxies on the earth perform the needed ordinances in behalf of these people so that the blessings of salvation may be theirs.

Those who never enjoy the powers of their mind and who are mentally handicapped need no baptism. They too die without the law, and, like little children, they “are alive in Christ” (Moroni 8:12). President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“The Lord has made it known by revelation that children born with retarded minds shall receive blessings just like little children who die in infancy. They are free from sin, because their minds are not capable of a correct understanding of right and wrong. Mormon, when writing to his son Moroni on the subject of baptism places deficient children in the same category with little children who are under the age of accountability, they do not require baptism, for the atonement of Jesus Christ takes care of them equally with little children who die before the age of accountability, as follows:

“For behold that all little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law. For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law; wherefore, he that is not condemned, or he that is under no condemnation, cannot repent; and unto such baptism availeth nothing.” [Moroni 8:22]

“Again the Lord has stated:

“And again, I say unto you, that whoso having knowledge, have I not commanded to repent?

“And he that hath no understanding, it remaineth in me to do according as it is written. . . .” [D&C 29:49–50]

“Therefore The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints considers all deficient children with retarded capacity to understand, just the same as little children under the age of accountability. They are redeemed without baptism and will go to the celestial kingdom of God, there, we believe, to have their faculties or other deficiencies restored according to the Father’s mercy and justice” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 3:20–21).

Points to Ponder

- Identify principles and practices of the Church in Nephite times that are identical to the Church today (see Moroni 2–6).
- What brings miracles?
- What strong terms did Mormon use in denouncing the evil practice of infant baptism? (see Moroni 8).

Chapter 52

Moroni 9–10

Introduction

Moroni challenged his readers to come unto Christ and enjoy the gifts of the Spirit which are given to those who keep the commandments.

Notes and Commentary

Moroni 9. Mormon’s Final Admonition to Moroni

Moroni 9 is Mormon’s final epistle to his son Moroni. Why do you suppose Moroni included this final admonition in his record? Do you think he wanted to show us what can happen to a people who completely lose the Spirit of the Lord? What are some of the characteristics of such a condition? How did the people react to the “word of God”? (v. 4). What had they lost? (see v. 5). What admonition did Mormon give to Moroni? (see v. 6). Should we ever cease trying to save souls? Note Mormon’s description of virtue in verse 9. How precious is virtue?

How does Mormon describe his people in verses 18 through 20. Elder Neal A. Maxwell commented on the meaning of *past feeling* as follows:

“President Harold B. Lee has called our attention to the phrase ‘past feeling’ which is used several places in the scriptures. In Ephesians, Paul links it to lasciviousness that apparently so sated its victims that they sought ‘uncleanness with greediness.’ Moroni used the same two words to describe a decaying society which was ‘without civilization,’ ‘without order and without mercy,’ and in which people had ‘lost their love, one towards another.’ . . . Nephi used the same concept in his earlier lamentation about his brothers’ inability to heed the urgings of the Spirit because they were ‘past feeling.’ The common thread is obvious: the inevitable dulling of our capacity to feel renders us impervious to conscience, to the needs of others, and to insights both intellectual and spiritual. Such imperceptivity, like alcoholism, apparently reaches a stage where the will can no longer enforce itself upon our impulses” (*For the Power Is in Them,*” p. 22).

Elder Maxwell also commented on how people reach this state:

“Our capacity to feel controls our behavior in many ways, and by inaction when our feelings prompt

us to do good, we deaden that capacity to feel. It was Jesus’ striking sensitivity to the needs of those about him that made it possible for him to respond in action.

“At the other end of the spiritual spectrum are individuals such as Nephi’s erring brothers; Nephi noted their increasing insensitivity to things spiritual: ‘[God] hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words.’ [1 Nephi 17:45.]

“When we become too encrusted with error, our spiritual antennae wilt and we slip beyond mortal reach. This can happen to entire civilizations. In his lamentation to his son Moroni, Mormon notes the deterioration of the Nephite society. The symptoms include a wickedness so profound that Mormon’s people were described by him as being ‘past feeling.’ [Moroni 9:20.] The Apostle Paul lamented the destructive lasciviousness of Church members in Ephesus because they had developed such insensitivity in their satiation that they were ‘past feeling.’ [Ephesians 4:19.] A sex-saturated society cannot really feel the needs of its suffering members because, instead of developing the love that looks outward, it turns man selfishly inward. Imperviousness to the promptings of the still small voice of God will also mean that we have ears but cannot hear, not only the promptings of God, but also the pleas of men” (*A Time to Choose,* pp. 59–60).

Moroni 10:1–7. The Formula for Receiving a Testimony

Responding to a question about gaining a testimony of the Book of Mormon, Daniel H. Ludlow said:

“To understand the promise found in Moroni 10:4, a person should read and ponder the verses immediately before and after. In the first edition of the Book of Mormon (1830), Moroni chapter 10 was all written as one paragraph.

“Let us examine carefully and individually verses 1–5:

“Verse 1: ‘Now I, Moroni, write somewhat as seemeth me good; and I write unto my brethren, the Lamanites; and I would that they should know that more than four hundred and twenty years have

passed away since the sign was given of the coming of Christ.’

“Although Moroni is addressing himself specifically to ‘the Lamanites,’ these words, as well as all of the words in the Book of Mormon, apply also to the Jews and the Gentiles. (See title page.)

“Verse 2: ‘And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you.’

“The words *these records* refer to the records upon which Moroni was then writing (the plates of Mormon), which were later received by Joseph Smith and translated as the Book of Mormon.

“Verse 3: ‘Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.’

“Too frequently this verse is not quoted in connection with verse four and, when quoted, is often misinterpreted. However, it is a key verse to understanding the full promise of Moroni 10:1–5. When analyzed thoroughly, this verse indicates that the honest seeker after truth must do two things:

“1. Read the Book of Mormon. The words *these things* in verse three refer back to the words *these records* in verse two—the records from which our present Book of Mormon was translated.

“2. ‘Ponder’ the dealings of God with men as recorded in the Book of Mormon, and then compare them with the dealings of God with men as recorded in the Bible. Although the word *Bible* is not found in this verse, Moroni indicates that the person should ‘remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things.’ The Bible provides a story of the Creation and the history of events from that time forward. However, the account of the Creation and subsequent happenings are *not* contained in the Book of Mormon. In fact, Moroni had earlier acknowledged that the Book of Mormon would not include this information. In explaining his abridgement of the Book of Ether, Moroni wrote:

“‘And now I, Moroni . . . take mine account from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi, which is called the Book of Ether.

“‘And as I suppose that the first part of this record, which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower, and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time, is had among the Jews—

“‘Therefore *I do not write those things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time.*’ (Ether 1:1–4; italics added.)

“Thus, if a sincere person hasn’t gained a testimony of the Book of Mormon after reading it, he should—as Moroni seems to suggest here—read the Bible as well, pondering in his heart *both* scriptural accounts of God’s dealings with his children.

“Verse 4: ‘And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.’

“Note that the word *read* is not even included in this verse; rather, the verb is *receive*. In other words, after the person has (1) read the Book of Mormon and (2) pondered the dealings of God with the peoples of the Book of Mormon and the Bible, he must then put himself in a frame of mind where he would be willing to ‘receive’ or ‘accept’ all these things. Then he must ask ‘with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ.’ Sincere pondering of the scriptures helps put a person in an appropriate frame of mind to ask for—and receive—divine guidance.

“The *things* we should be in a position to receive (accept) may refer not only to the Book of Mormon, but also to everything mentioned in verses two and three. Similarly, the word *it* near the end of verse four (‘he will manifest the truth of *it* unto you’) may refer to the process of God’s dealing with men, along with referring to the Book of Mormon itself. In either case, if a person receives ‘the truth of *it*,’ he will believe in (accept) the Book of Mormon.

“Verse 5: ‘And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.’

“This verse indicates that the principles contained in the formula for learning truth as explained in verses one through four can also be applied to areas other than learning the truth of the Book of Mormon.

“As to whether this promise is Moroni’s or the Lord’s, Doctrine and Covenants 68:4 reads:

“And whatsoever they [the Lord’s chosen servants] shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.’

“When Moroni ‘speaks’ or writes by the power of the Holy Ghost, his writings represent the ‘will . . . mind . . . word . . . [and] voice of the Lord.’ Thus it is appropriate to say this promise comes *from* the Lord *through* the writings of Moroni.

“When a person follows this divine formula, the results are certain: He will gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon. God cannot and does not lie, and his promises made through his prophets are sure. Therefore, any person who claims to have followed the various requirements but says he has not gained a testimony should check to see which step he has not followed faithfully or completely:

“1. He should read and ponder the Book of Mormon—all of it.

“2. He should remember the methods God has used in working with the peoples of both the Book of Mormon and the Bible—and ponder these things in his heart.

“3. He should put himself in a frame of mind where he would be willing to accept (receive) all of ‘these things’—the Book of Mormon, the Bible, and the way God works with men.

“4. ‘With a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ,’ he should ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Jesus Christ ‘if these things are not true.’

“5. He should be able to recognize the promptings and feelings which will be evidences to him of the truth of ‘these things’ (including the Book of Mormon) as they are made manifest unto him ‘by the power of the Holy Ghost.’” (“I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1986, pp. 50–51).

Moroni 10:8–18. The Gifts of the Spirit

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote the following about the gifts of the Spirit:

“By the grace of God—following devotion, faith, and obedience on man’s part—certain special spiritual blessings called *gifts of the Spirit* are bestowed upon men. Their receipt is always predicated upon obedience to law, but because they are freely available to all the obedient, they are called gifts. They are signs

and miracles reserved for the faithful and for none else.

“Moroni says that the gifts of God come from Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost and by the Spirit of Christ. (Moro. 10.) In other words, the gifts come by the power of that Spirit who is the Holy Ghost, but the Spirit of Christ (or light of Christ) is the agency through which the Holy Ghost operates.

“Their purpose is to enlighten, encourage, and edify the faithful so that they will inherit peace in this life and be guided toward eternal life in the world to come. Their presence is proof of the divinity of the Lord’s work; where they are not found, there the Church and kingdom of God is not. The promise is that they shall never be done away as long as the earth continues in its present state, except for unbelief (Moro. 10:19), but when the perfect day comes and the saints obtain exaltation, there will be no more need for them. As Paul expressed it, ‘When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.’ (1 Cor. 13.)

“Faithful persons are expected to seek the gifts of the Spirit with all their hearts. They are to ‘covet earnestly the best gifts’ (1 Cor. 12:31; D. & C. 46:8), to ‘desire spiritual gifts’ (1 Cor. 14:1), ‘to ask of God, who giveth liberally.’ (D. & C. 46:7; Matt. 7:7–8.) To some will be given one gift; to others, another; and ‘unto some it may be given to have all those gifts, that there may be a head, in order that every member may be profited thereby.’ (D. & C. 46:29.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 314).

Moroni 10:24–32. Moroni’s Final Testimony to the World

In his final words, Moroni poignantly warns and counsels us on several items:

1. He warns us that if the time comes when we do not have the power and gifts of God, our state will be one of serious unbelief (see Moroni 10:24–26).
2. He reminds us that he will stand as a witness at the bar of judgment, testifying of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon (see v. 27; compare this with Nephi’s words in 2 Nephi 33:11, 15).
3. He exhorts us to come unto Christ and lay hold of every good thing so that we can put on the “beautiful garments” of righteousness (see D&C 82:14) and the strength of priesthood power (see D&C 113:8), and no more be confounded (see Moroni 10:30–31; compare this exhortation with Nephi’s final exhortation in 2 Nephi 33:10).

4. He declares that we can only be perfected in Christ and that we must deny ourselves of all ungodliness (see Moroni 10:32).
5. He promises that if we love God with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength, then His grace is sufficient to make us perfect (see v. 32).
6. He promises that through the grace and power of God, but dependent upon our willingness to demonstrate good works, we are sanctified through the atoning blood of the Savior and cleansed completely from sin (see v. 33).

Points to Ponder

- Despite the hardness of the Nephites, why do you suppose Mormon and Moroni continued to labor among them?
- Why are gifts of the Spirit given?
- Where do gifts of the Spirit come from?
- Which gifts do you have?
- What can you do to develop or receive gifts?
- How can you truly “come unto Christ”? (Moroni 10:30).
- Develop a plan for receiving or strengthening your testimony of the Book of Mormon.

Appendix A

The Book of Mormon— Keystone of Our Religion

by President Ezra Taft Benson

My beloved brethren and sisters, today I would like to speak about one of the most significant gifts given to the world in modern times. The gift I am thinking of is more important than any of the inventions that have come out of the industrial and technological revolutions. This is a gift of greater value to mankind than even the many wonderful advances we have seen in modern medicine. It is of greater worth to mankind than the development of flight or space travel. I speak of the gift of the Book of Mormon, given to mankind 156 years ago.

This gift was prepared by the hand of the Lord over a period of more than a thousand years, then hidden up by Him so that it would be preserved in its purity for our generation. Perhaps there is nothing that testifies more clearly of the importance of this modern book of scripture than what the Lord Himself has said about it.

By His own mouth He has borne witness (1) that it is true (D&C 17:6), (2) that it contains the truth and His words (D&C 19:26), (3) that it was translated by power from on high (D&C 20:8), (4) that it contains the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ (D&C 20:9, 42:12), (5) that it was given by inspiration and confirmed by the ministering of angels (D&C 20:10), (6) that it gives evidence that the holy scriptures are true (D&C 20:11), and (7) that those who receive it in faith shall receive eternal life (D&C 20:14).

A second powerful testimony to the importance of the Book of Mormon is to note where the Lord placed its coming forth in the timetable of the unfolding Restoration. The only thing that preceded it was the First Vision. In that marvelous manifestation, the Prophet Joseph Smith learned the true nature of God and that God had a work for him to do. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon was the next thing to follow.

Think of that in terms of what it implies. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon preceded the restoration of the priesthood. It was published just a few days before the Church was organized. The Saints were given the Book of Mormon to read before they

were given the revelations outlining such great doctrines as the three degrees of glory, celestial marriage, or work for the dead. It came before priesthood quorums and Church organization. Doesn't this tell us something about how the Lord views this sacred work?

Once we realize how the Lord feels about this book, it should not surprise us that He also gives us solemn warnings about how we receive it. After indicating that those who receive the Book of Mormon with faith, working righteousness, will receive a crown of eternal glory (see D&C 20:14), the Lord follows with this warning: "But those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation" (D&C 20:15).

In 1829, the Lord warned the Saints that they are not to trifle with sacred things (see D&C 6:12). Surely the Book of Mormon is a sacred thing, and yet many trifle with it, or in other words, take it lightly, treat it as though it is of little importance.

In 1832, as some early missionaries returned from their fields of labor, the Lord reproved them for treating the Book of Mormon lightly. As a result of that attitude, he said, their minds had been darkened. Not only had treating this sacred book lightly brought a loss of light to themselves, it had also brought the whole Church under condemnation, even all the children of Zion. And then the Lord said, "And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon" (D&C 84:54–57).

Has the fact that we have had the Book of Mormon with us for over a century and a half made it seem less significant to us today? Do we remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon? In the Bible we have the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word *testament* is the English rendering of a Greek word that can also be translated as *covenant*. Is this what the Lord meant when He called the Book of Mormon the "new covenant"? It is indeed another testament or witness of Jesus. This is one of the reasons why we have recently added the words "Another Testament of Jesus Christ" to the title of the Book of Mormon.

If the early Saints were rebuked for treating the Book of Mormon lightly, are we under any less condemnation if we do the same? The Lord Himself

bears testimony that it is of eternal significance. Can a small number of us bring the whole Church under condemnation because we trifle with sacred things? What will we say at the Judgment when we stand before Him and meet His probing gaze if we are among those described as forgetting the new covenant?

There are three great reasons why Latter-day Saints should make the study of the Book of Mormon a lifetime pursuit.

The *first* is that the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion. This was the Prophet Joseph Smith's statement. He testified that "the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion" (*History of the Church*, 4:461). A keystone is the central stone in an arch. It holds all the other stones in place, and if removed, the arch crumbles.

There are three ways in which the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion. It is the keystone in our witness of Christ. It is the keystone of our doctrine. It is the keystone of testimony.

The Book of Mormon is the keystone in our witness of Jesus Christ, who is Himself the cornerstone of everything we do. It bears witness of His reality with power and clarity. Unlike the Bible, which passed through generations of copyists, translators, and corrupt religionists who tampered with the text, the Book of Mormon came from writer to reader in just one inspired step of translation. Therefore, its testimony of the Master is clear, undiluted, and full of power. But it does even more. Much of the Christian world today rejects the divinity of the Savior. They question His miraculous birth, His perfect life, and the reality of His glorious resurrection. The Book of Mormon teaches in plain and unmistakable terms about the truth of all of those. It also provides the most complete explanation of the doctrine of the Atonement. Truly, this divinely inspired book is a keystone in bearing witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ (see title page of the Book of Mormon).

The Book of Mormon is also the keystone of the doctrine of the Resurrection. As mentioned before, the Lord Himself has stated that the Book of Mormon contains the "fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (D&C 20:9). That does not mean it contains every teaching, every doctrine ever revealed. Rather, it means that in the Book of Mormon we will find the fulness of those doctrines required for our salvation.

And they are taught plainly and simply so that even children can learn the ways of salvation and exaltation. The Book of Mormon offers so much that broadens our understandings of the doctrines of salvation. Without it, much of what is taught in other scriptures would not be nearly so plain and precious.

Finally, the Book of Mormon is the keystone of testimony. Just as the arch crumbles if the keystone is removed, so does all the Church stand or fall with the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. The enemies of the Church understand this clearly. This is why they go to such great lengths to try to disprove the Book of Mormon, for if it can be discredited, the Prophet Joseph Smith goes with it. So does our claim to priesthood keys, and revelation, and the restored Church. But in like manner, if the Book of Mormon be true—and millions have now testified that they have the witness of the Spirit that it is indeed true—then one must accept the claims of the Restoration and all that accompanies it.

Yes, my beloved brothers and sisters, the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion—the keystone of our testimony, the keystone of our doctrine, and the keystone in the witness of our Lord and Savior.

The *second* great reason why we must make the Book of Mormon a center focus of study is that it was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, he abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us.

Each of the major writers of the Book of Mormon testified that he wrote for future generations. Nephi said: "The Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation" (2 Nephi 25:21). His brother Jacob, who succeeded him, wrote similar words: "For [Nephi] said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates, and that I should preserve these plates and hand them down unto my seed, from generation to generation" (Jacob 1:3). Enos and Jarom both indicated that they too were writing not for their own peoples but for future generations (see Enos 1:15–16, Jarom 1:2).

Mormon himself said, "Yea, I speak unto you, ye remnant of the house of Israel" (Mormon 7:1). And Moroni, the last of the inspired writers, actually saw

our day and time. “Behold,” he said, “the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.

“Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing” (Mormon 8:34–35).

If they saw our day and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, “Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?”

And there is example after example of how that question will be answered. For example, in the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming. A major portion of the book centers on the few decades just prior to Christ’s coming to America. By careful study of that time period, we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded His coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of His hands and feet.

From the Book of Mormon we learn how disciples of Christ live in times of war. From the Book of Mormon we see the evils of secret combinations portrayed in graphic and chilling reality. In the Book of Mormon we find lessons for dealing with persecution and apostasy. We learn much about how to do missionary work. And more than anywhere else, we see in the Book of Mormon the dangers of materialism and setting our hearts on the things of the world. Can anyone doubt that this book was meant for us and that in it we find great power, great comfort, and great protection?

The *third* reason why the Book of Mormon is of such value to Latter-day Saints is given in the same statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith cited previously. He said, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (*History of the Church*, 4:461). That is the third reason for studying the book. It helps us draw nearer to God. Is there not something deep in our hearts that longs to draw nearer to God, to be more like Him in our daily walk, to feel His presence with

us constantly? If so, then the Book of Mormon will help us do so more than any other book.

It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called “the words of life” (D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance.

Our beloved brother, President Marion G. Romney, who celebrated his eighty-ninth birthday last month and who knows of himself of the power that resides in this book, testified of the blessings that can come into the lives of those who will read and study the Book of Mormon. He said:

“I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, p. 90; or *Ensign*, May 1980, p. 67).

These promises—increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—are not idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God.

Brethren and sisters, I implore you with all my heart that you consider with great solemnity the importance of the Book of Mormon to you personally and to the Church collectively.

Over ten years ago I made the following statement regarding the Book of Mormon:

“Do eternal consequences rest upon our response to this book? Yes, either to our blessing or our condemnation.

“Every Latter-day Saint should make the study of this book a lifetime pursuit. Otherwise he is placing his soul in jeopardy and neglecting that which could give spiritual and intellectual unity to his whole life. There is a difference between a convert who is built on the rock of Christ through the Book of Mormon and stays hold of that iron rod, and one who is not” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, p. 97; or *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 65).

I reaffirm those words to you this day. Let us not remain under condemnation, with its scourge and judgment, by treating lightly this great and marvelous gift the Lord has given to us. Rather, let us win the promises associated with treasuring it up in our hearts.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 84, verses 54 to 58, we read:

“And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—

“Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation.

“And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all.

“And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—

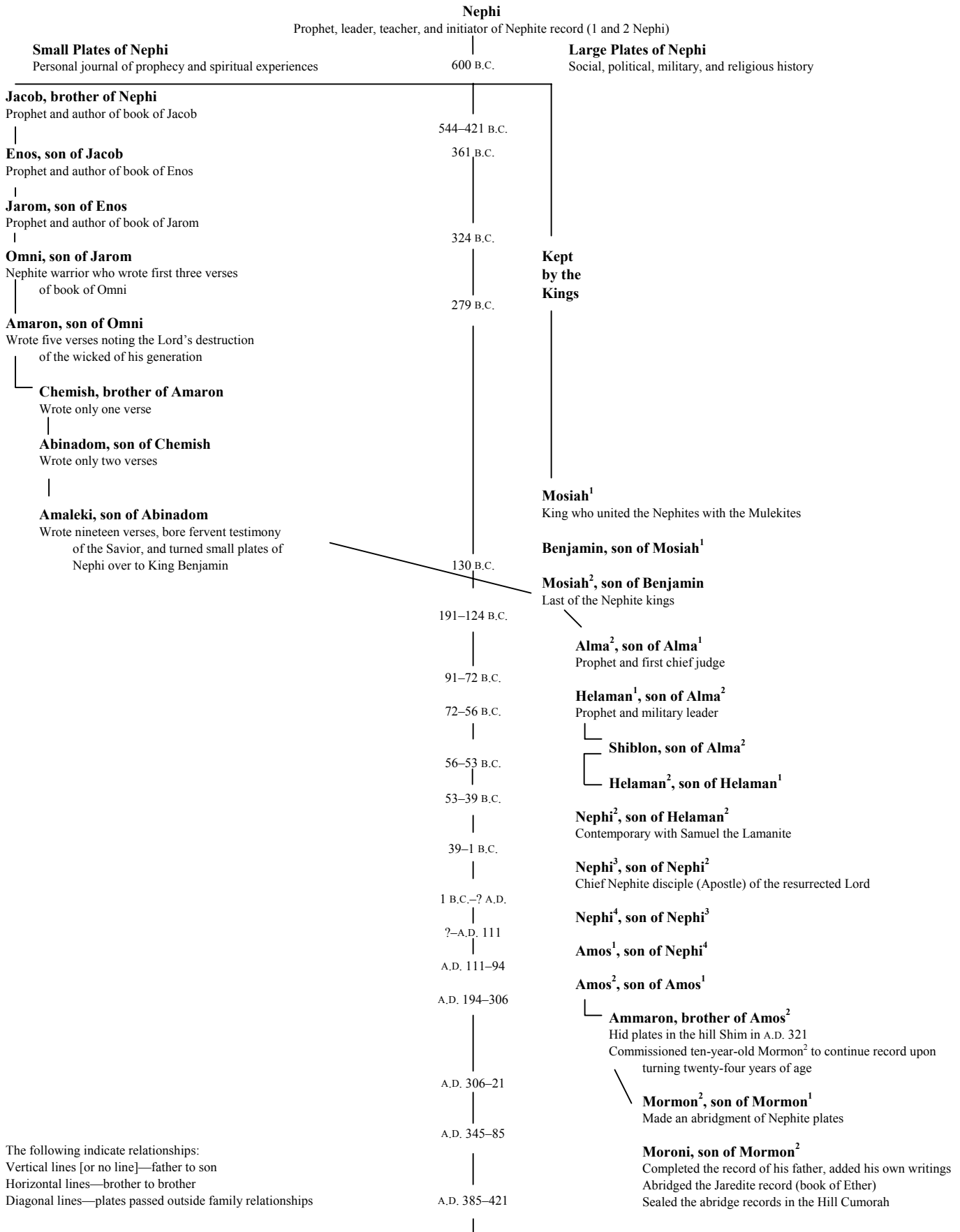
“That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion.”

Since last general conference, I have received many letters from Saints, both young and old, from all over the world who accepted the challenge to read and study the Book of Mormon.

I have been thrilled by their accounts of how their lives have been changed and how they have drawn closer to the Lord as a result of their commitment. These glorious testimonies have reaffirmed to my soul the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith that the Book of Mormon is truly “the keystone of our religion” and that a man and woman will “get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”

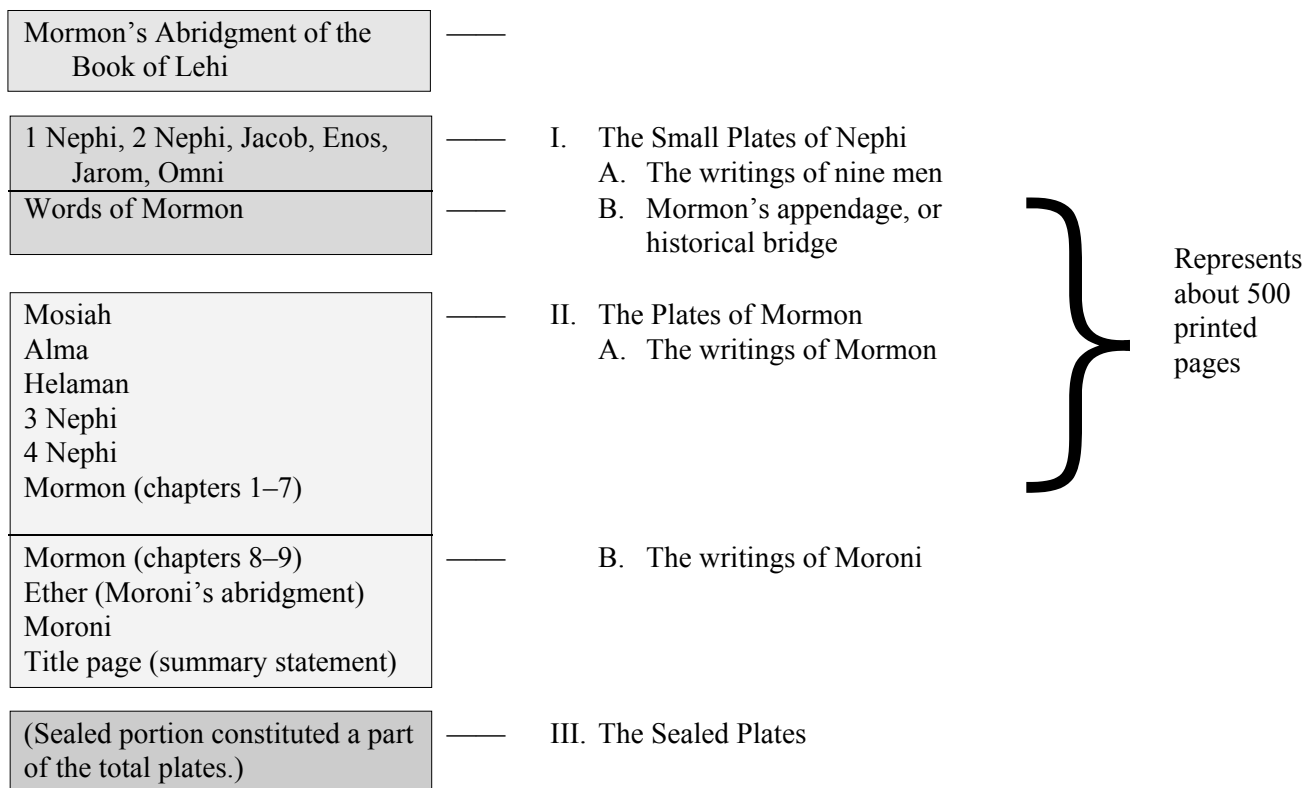
This is my prayer, that the Book of Mormon may become the keystone of our lives, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, pp. 3–7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, pp. 4–7).

Appendix B: Nephite Record Keepers

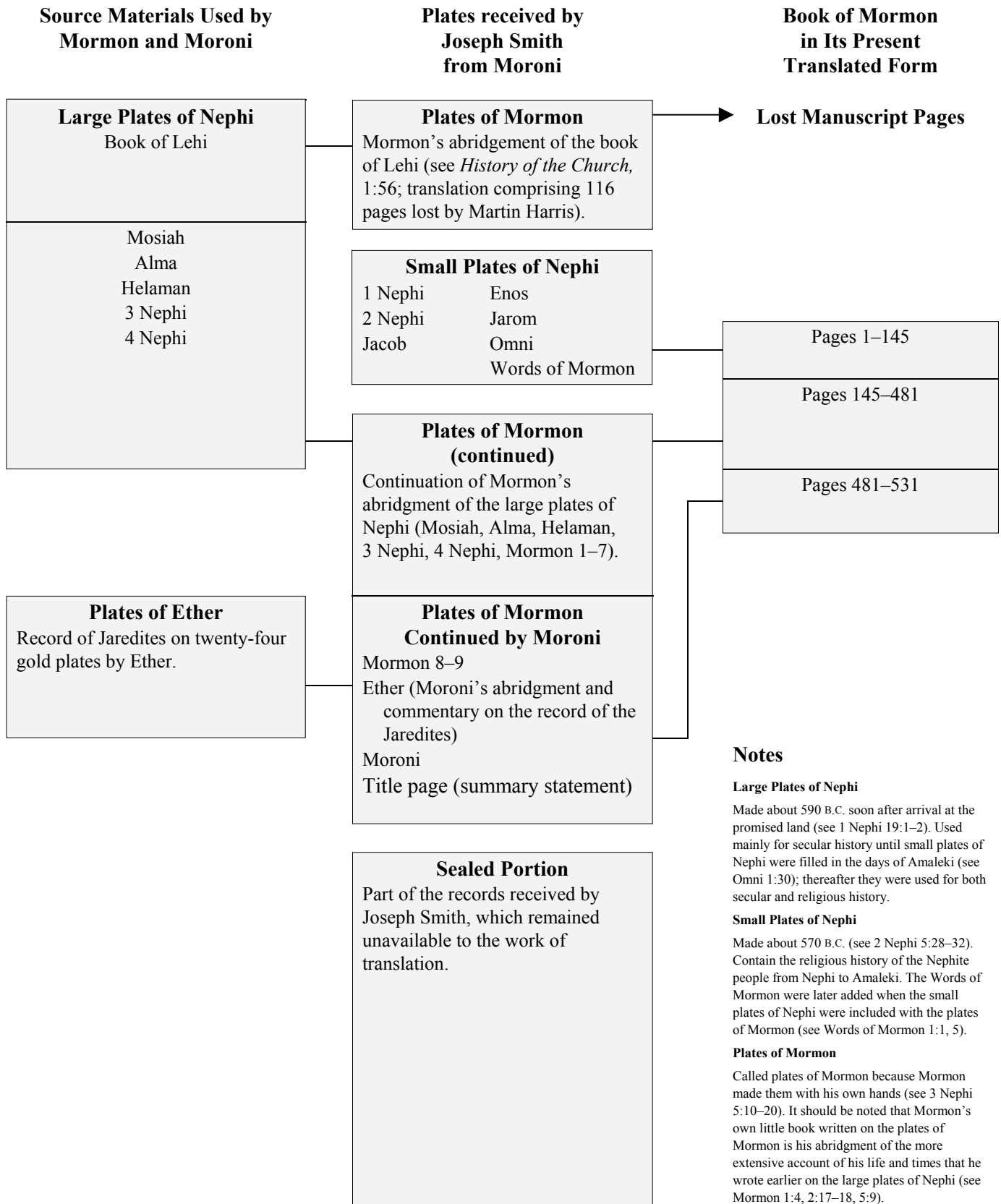


Portion of the Record Extracted for Publication

The diagram represents the portion of the plates that was included and the portion of the plates that was not included in the published Book of Mormon. It also represents the substitution of the translated text of the small plates of Nephi instead of Mormon's abridgement of the book of Lehi.



Compilation of the Book of Mormon



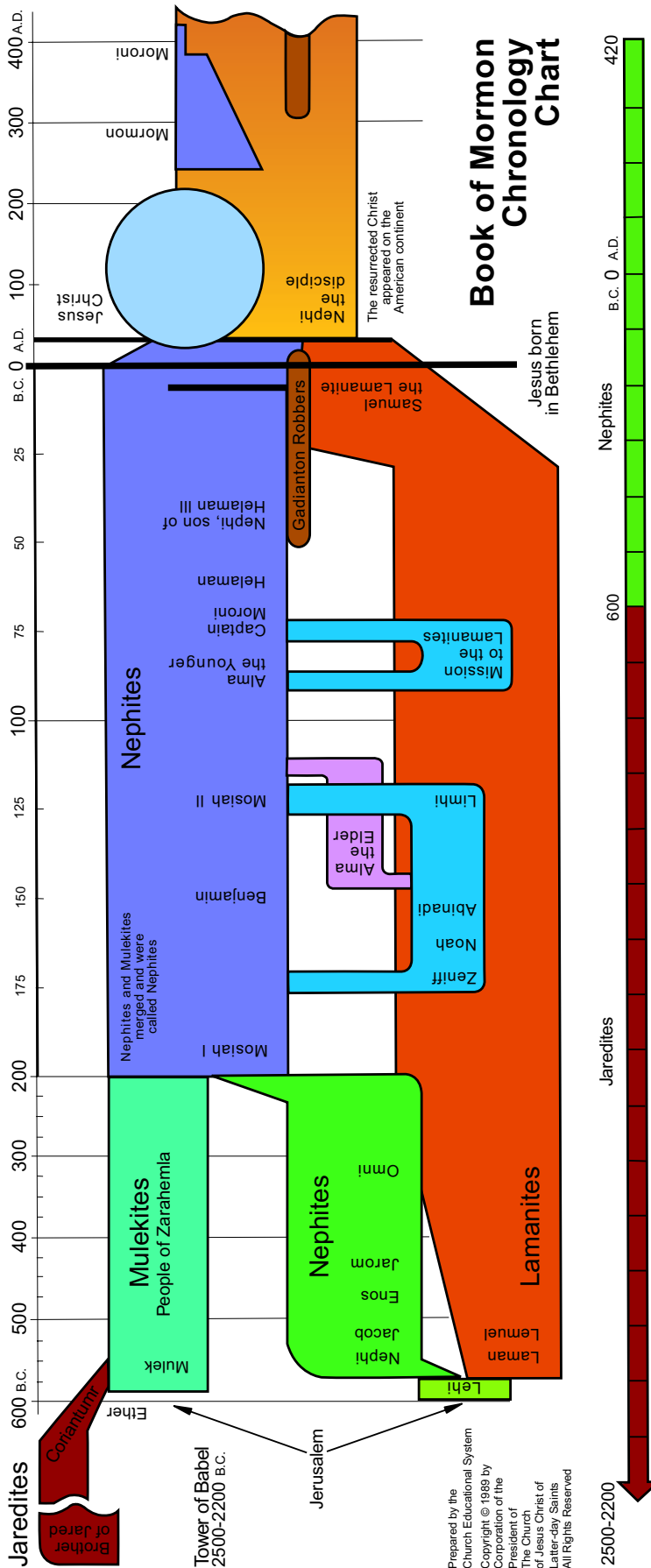
The Witnesses of the Book of Mormon Plates

The Three Witnesses

Date of Birth	Place of Birth	Age When Shown Plates	Occupation	Relationships with the Church	Death
Oliver Cowdery 3 Oct. 1806	Wells, Rutland County, Vermont	23	School teacher Lawyer	Baptized 15 May 1829. Excommunicated 12 Apr. 1838. Rebaptized Oct. 1848. Died in full fellowship. Never denied his testimony concerning the Book of Mormon.	3 Mar. 1850 Richmond, Missouri
Martin Harris 18 May 1783	East-Town, Saratoga County, New York	46	Farmer	Baptized 6 Apr. 1830. Excommunicated last week in Dec. 1837. Baptized again 7 Nov. 1842. Rebaptized in Salt Lake City, Utah, 17 Sept. 1870. Never denied his testimony concerning the plates. Died in full fellowship.	10 July 1875 Clarkston, Utah
David Whitmer 7 Jan. 1805	Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	24	Farmer	Baptized June 1829. Excommunicated 13 Apr. 1838. Never returned to the Church. Never denied his testimony.	25 Jan. 1888 Richmond, Missouri

The Eight Witnesses

Christian Whitmer 18 Jan. 1798	Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	31	Shoemaker	Baptized 11 Apr. 1830. Always faithful to the Church.	27 Nov. 1835 Clay County, Missouri
Jacob Whitmer 27 Jan. 1800	Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	29	Shoemaker	Baptized 11 Apr. 1830. Apostatized 1838. Never returned to the Church. Never denied his testimony of the plates.	21 Apr. 1856 Richmond, Missouri
Peter Whitmer, Jr. 27 Sept. 1809	Fayette, New York	20	Tailor Farmer	Baptized June 1829. Always faithful to the Church.	22 Sept. 1836 Liberty, Clay County, Missouri
John Whitmer 27 Aug. 1802	Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	27	Farmer	Baptized June 1829. Excommunicated 10 Mar. 1838. Never returned to the Church. Never denied his testimony.	11 July 1878 Far West, Missouri
Hiram Page 1800	Vermont	29	Physician Farmer	Baptized 11 Apr. 1830. Apostatized 1838. Never denied his testimony.	12 Aug. 1852 Excelsior Springs, Missouri
Joseph Smith, Sr. 12 July 1771	Topsfield, Essex County, Massachusetts	58	Farmer	Baptized 6 Apr. 1830. Always a faithful member of the Church.	14 Sept. 1840 Nauvoo, Illinois
Hyrum Smith 9 Feb. 1800	Tunbridge, Vermont	29	Farmer	Baptized May 1829. Always a faithful member of the Church.	27 June 1844 Carthage, Illinois
Samuel H. Smith 13 Mar. 1806	Tunbridge, Vermont	21	Farmer	Baptized May 1829. Always a faithful member of the Church.	30 July 1844 Nauvoo, Illinois



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The history of the Jaredites covered nearly twice as many years as that of the Nephtes.

The Major Leaders During Nephite History—600 B.C. to A.D. 421

Year— Reign of Judges	Christian Year	King, Chief Judge, or Governor	Historian and/or Church Leader	Military Leader
	600 B.C.	Nephi (2 Nephi 5:18–19)	Nephi (1 Nephi 1:1–3; 19:1–4)	Nephi (2 Nephi 5:14; Jacob 1:10)
	544 B.C.	Others designated (Jacob 1:9)	Jacob (2 Nephi 5:26; Jacob 1:1–4; 17–18)	
	Between 544 and 420 B.C.		Enos and many prophets (Enos 1:22, 26)	
	399 B.C.	“Mighty men in the faith of the Lord” (Jarom 1:7)	Jarom and the prophets of the Lord (Jarom 1:1, 10–11)	“Mighty men in the faith of the Lord” (Jarom 1:7)
	361 B.C.		Omni (Omni 1:1–3)	
	317 B.C.		Amaron (Omni 1:4–8) Chemish (Omni 1:9)	
	Between 279 and 130 B.C.	Mosiah I (Omni 1:12–23) Benjamin (Omni 1:23–25; Words of Mormon)	Abinadom (Omni 1:10–11) Amaleki (Omni 1:12)	Mosiah I (Omni 1:12–23) Benjamin (Omni 1:23–25)
	124 B.C.	Mosiah II (Mosiah 1:15)	Benjamin with the holy prophets (Words of Mormon 1:16–18; Mosiah 1–6) Mosiah II (Mosiah 6:3)	
	122 B.C.		Alma I (Mosiah 25:19; 26:28)	
1	91 B.C.	Alma II (Mosiah 29:44)	Alma II (Mosiah 29:42)	Alma II (Alma 2:16)
9	83 B.C.	Nephihah (Alma 4:17, 20)		
18	74 B.C.			Moroni (Alma 43:17)
19	73 B.C.		Helaman II (Alma 37:1; 45:20–23)	
24	68–67 B.C.	Pahoran (Alma 50:39–40)		
32	60 B.C.			Moronihah (Alma 62:43)
36	56 B.C.		Shiblon (Alma 63:1)	
39	53 B.C.		Helaman III (Alma 63:11)	
40	52 B.C.	Pahoran II (Helaman 1:1, 5) and Pacumeni (Helaman 1:13)		
42	50 B.C.	Helaman III (Helaman 2:1–2)		
53	39 B.C.	Nephi I (Helaman 3:37)	Nephi I (Helaman 3:37)	Last reference to Moronihah (Helaman 4:18)
62	30 B.C.	Cezoram (Helaman 4:18; 5:1)		
66	26 B.C.	Cezoram’s son (Helaman 6:15)		
?	?	Seezoram (Helaman 6:39; 9:23)		
92	A.D. 1	Lachoneus I (3 Nephi 1:1)	Nephi II (3 Nephi 1:1–2)	
	A.D. 16			Gidgiddoni (3 Nephi 3:18)
	A.D. 30	Lachoneus II (3 Nephi 6:19)		
	?		Nephi III (?) (Superscription to 4 Nephi)	
	A.D. 110		Amos I (4 Nephi 1:19–20)	
	A.D. 194		Amos II (4 Nephi 1:21)	
	A.D. 305		Ammaron (4 Nephi 1:47)	
	A.D. 321 to 335		Mormon (Mormon 1:1–3)	
	A.D. 326			Mormon (Mormon 2:2)
	A.D. 385		Moroni (Mormon 6:6)	

Nephi's Vision (1 Nephi 10–14)

Christ's Ministry Among the Jews

1. Virgin Birth (11:13–23)
2. John the Baptist (10:7–10)
3. Ministry of Christ (11:24); the Apostles (11:29)
4. Miracles (11:31); trial and crucifixion (11:32–33)
5. Persecution against Apostles (11:35)

The Nephite-Lamanite Civilization

1. Christ's ministry to Nephites (12:4–10)
2. Battle between Nephites and Lamanites (12:13–19)
3. Destruction of Nephites (12:20)
4. Degeneration of Lamanites (12:23)

The Thrust of Nephi's Vision Was of the Latter Days.

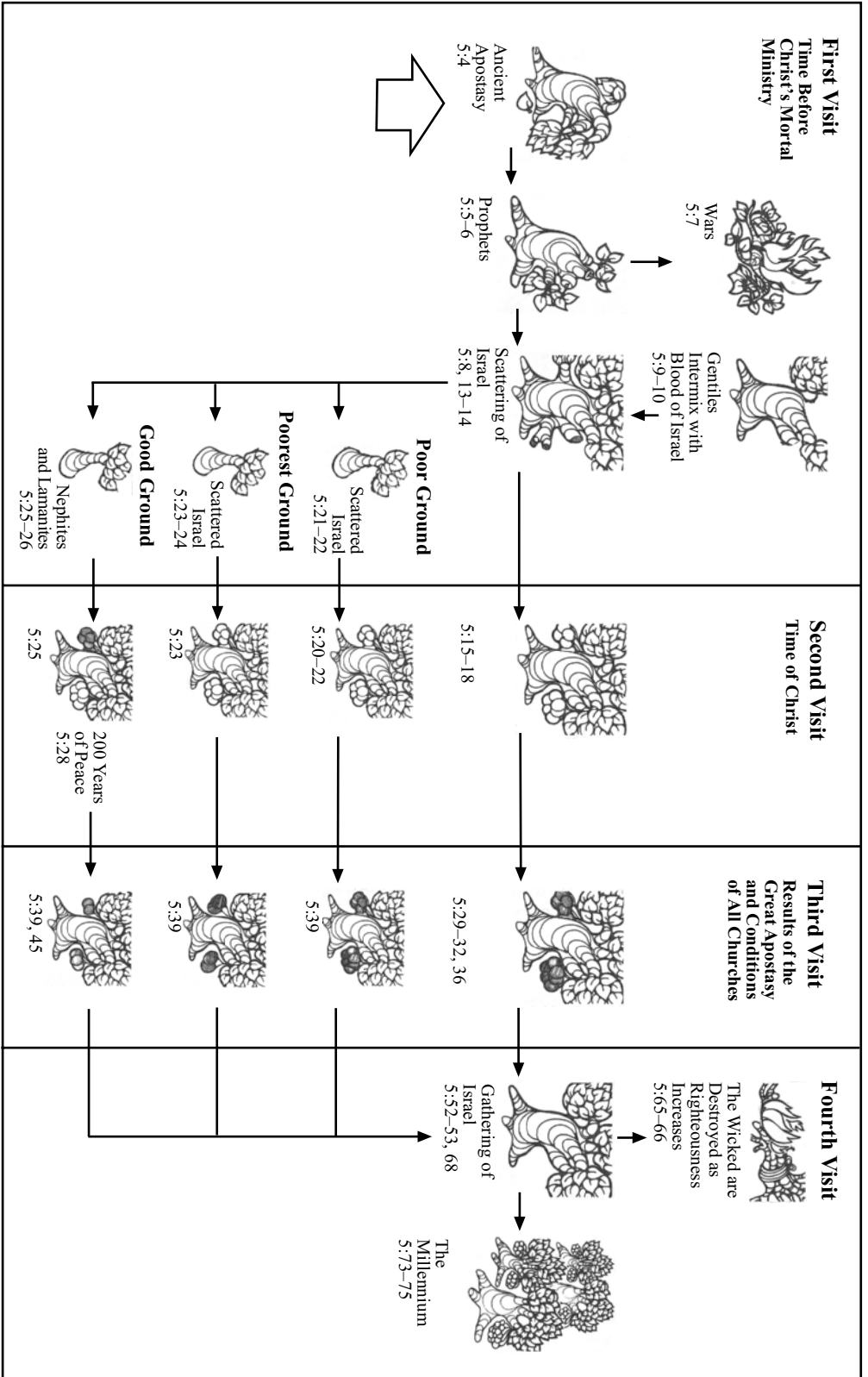
The Gentile Nations

Foundation of a great church (13:4–9)
Columbus discovers America (13:12)
Puritans migrate to America (13:13)
American Indian wars—scattering of latter-day
Lamanites (12:14)
Revolutionary War (13:16–19)
Changes in the Bible to cause misunderstanding
(13:20–34)
Restoration of the gospel (14:7)
Bible and Book of Mormon taken to Lamanites
(13:35–41)
Gentile promise (13:34, 42)
Wars and rumors of wars (14:16)
Saints of the church of the Lamb armed with
righteousness and the power of God (14:14)
Wrath of God poured out upon the great and
abominable church (14:13)

The Second Coming

Nephi made it clear that he had witnessed the events surrounding the second coming of the Lord and the end of the world, but he was forbidden to write about them for that was the stewardship of John the Revelator (and others who have written about them). Nephi's vision, therefore, climaxes in the account written by John in the book of Revelation.

Zenos' Allegory of the Tame and Wild Olive Trees, Jacob 5 (A Plausible Interpretation)



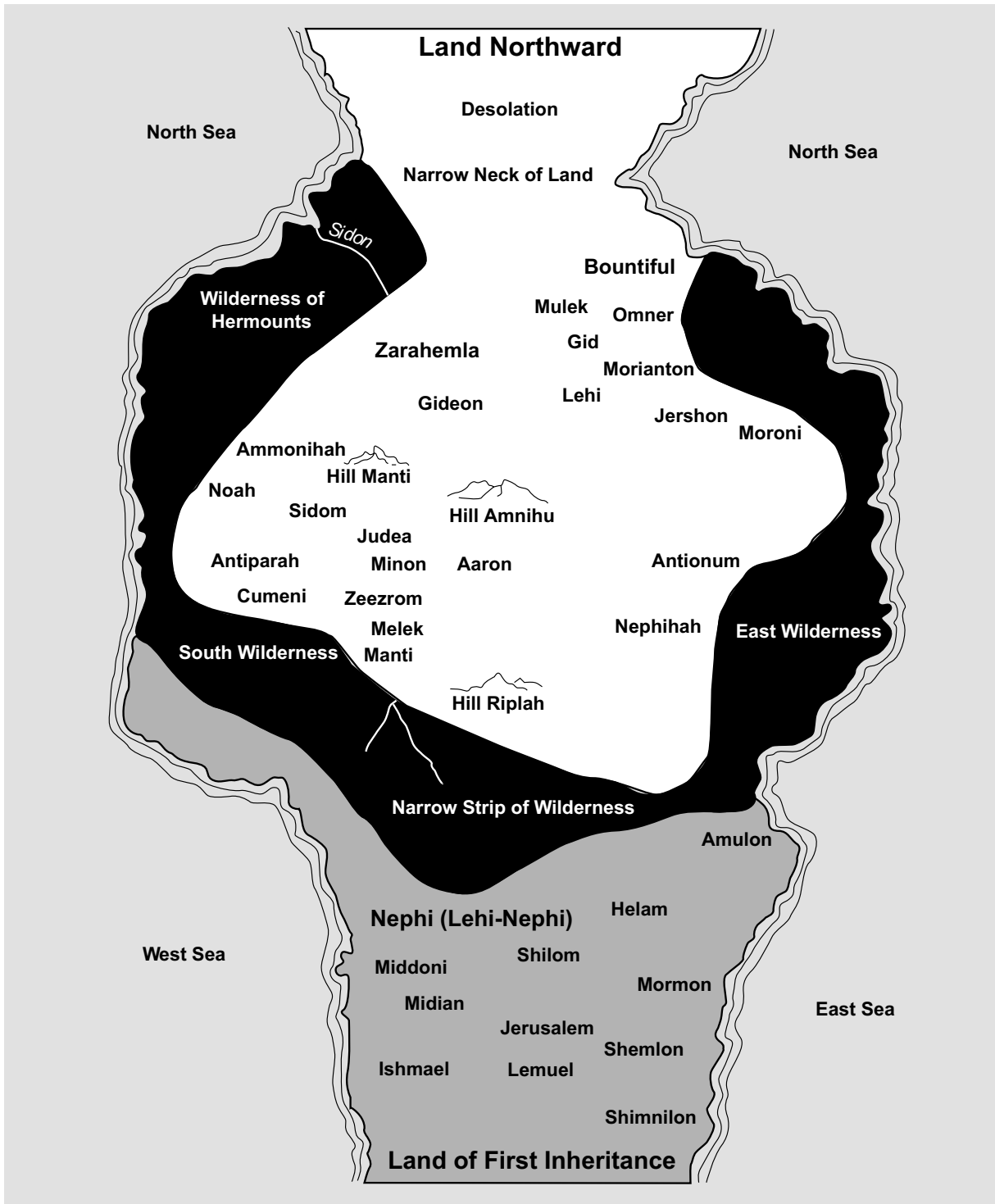
First Visit
Seeing that the old tame olive tree (Israel) was dying, the master pruned and fertilized it (see Jacob 5:4). Dead branches were burned (see v. 7), and wild branches (Gentiles) were grafted into the old root tree (see vv. 9-11). Tame branches were transplanted to the "nethermost parts of the vineyard" (v. 14) into good ground, poor ground, and the poorest ground.

Second Visit
The master inspects the old root tree and finds the wild branches bearing good fruit. The old root tree is saved (see Jacob 5:17-18). The master visits the tame branches planted in the "nethermost parts" and finds those planted in the good ground bearing part good and part wild fruit (Nephites and Lamanites). Those branches planted in the poor and poorest ground were bearing good fruit.

Third Visit
The master again visits the old root tree. He finds it cumbered with much fruit. He then visits the tame branches in the "nethermost parts" (see Jacob 5:38). These have become corrupt. In the "good" spot, the wild branches have overcome the tame (Lamanites overcome Nephites) (see vv. 39, 45).

Fourth Visit
The master calls servants to help (see Jacob 5:61). He brings branches from the "nethermost" trees to the old root tree (gathering of Israel) (see v. 52). The branches of all the trees are gradually pruned until the growth is balanced. The bad branches are burned (see vv. 65-66). All the trees bring forth natural (good) fruit (see vv. 73-75).

Possible Book of Mormon Sites (in Relationship to Each Other)



Possible comparative relationships for use of the sites mentioned in the Book of Mormon based on internal evidences. No effort should be made to identify points on this map with any existing geographical locations (cf. 3 Nephi 8:5–18). Originally prepared by Daniel H. Ludlow and used by his permission.

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