

CHAPTER 9

2 Nephi 9–10

Introduction

We all know someone who has died. Thankfully, knowledge of Heavenly Father’s gospel plan offers us peace in the midst of deep sadness. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob taught of the great blessings of the Atonement by describing what would happen to our body and our spirit had there been no Atonement. Jacob testified of the greatness of God, who prepared a way for our salvation. He described how the Savior tenderly comforts, pleads for, and redeems Israel. By accepting and following the Lord’s commandments, we place ourselves in a position to receive His promised blessings. Consider the impact and blessings of the Atonement in your life.

Commentary

2 Nephi 9:1–3. Rejoice Forever in the Atonement

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that Christ and His Atonement should be at the heart of our rejoicings:

“Jacob’s testimony was that ‘the Mighty God’ will always deliver ‘his covenant people,’ and that the Mighty God is, by his own divine declaration, the Lord Jesus Christ, the ‘Savior and . . . Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.’

“Jacob reflected on such teachings—especially those contained in the writings of Isaiah—so that his current audience and future readers ‘might know concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel,’ giving the parents of every generation cause to ‘rejoice’ and to ‘lift up [their] heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon [their] children.’

“At the heart of that covenant and the reason for such rejoicing is the atoning sacrifice of that ‘Mighty God’ who is the Savior and Redeemer of the world” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 66–67).

2 NEPHI 9:2

What will the Jews be restored to as an important part of their gathering?

2 Nephi 9:5–6. Atonement Central to the Merciful Plan

- The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared to the world the central role of the Savior and His influence on all mankind:

“We offer our testimony of the reality of His matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice. None other has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live upon the earth.

“He was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New. . . .

“He instituted the sacrament as a reminder of His great atoning sacrifice. He was arrested and condemned on spurious charges, convicted to satisfy a mob, and sentenced to die on Calvary’s cross. He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. His was a great vicarious gift in behalf of all who would ever live upon the earth.



“We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world” (“The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3).

- President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency declared the importance of our understanding the power of the Atonement:

“Our salvation depends on believing in and accepting the Atonement. Such acceptance requires a continual effort to understand it more fully. The Atonement advances our mortal course of learning by making it possible for our natures to become perfect. . . .

“. . . Any increase in our understanding of His atoning sacrifice draws us closer to Him. Literally, the Atonement means to be ‘at one’ with Him. The nature of the Atonement and its effects is so infinite, so unfathomable, and so profound that it lies beyond the knowledge and comprehension of mortal man. . . .

“We long for the ultimate blessing of the Atonement—to become one with Him, to be in His divine presence, to be called individually by name as He warmly welcomes us home with a radiant smile, beckoning us with open arms to be enfolded in His boundless love. How gloriously sublime this experience will be if we can feel worthy enough to be in His presence! The free gift of His great atoning sacrifice for each of us is the only way we can be exalted enough to stand before Him and see Him face-to-face. The overwhelming message of the Atonement is the perfect love the Savior has for each and all of us. It is a love which is full of mercy, patience, grace, equity, long-suffering, and, above all, forgiving” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 19, 22; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 18, 20).

2 Nephi 9:7. The Infinite Atonement

- Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained several ways in which the Atonement is infinite:

“His Atonement is infinite—without an end. It was also infinite in that all humankind would be saved from never-ending death. It was infinite in terms of His immense suffering. It was infinite in time, putting an end to the preceding prototype of animal sacrifice. It was infinite in scope—it was to be done once for all. And the mercy of the Atonement extends not only to an infinite



number of people, but also to an infinite number of worlds created by Him. It was infinite beyond any human scale of measurement or mortal comprehension.

“Jesus was the only one who could offer such an infinite atonement, since He was born of a mortal mother and an immortal Father. Because of that unique birthright, Jesus was an infinite Being” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 46; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 35).

2 NEPHI 9:6–9
What did Jacob say would happen to your spirit and to your body if there were no Atonement?

2 Nephi 9:10. “O How Great the Goodness of Our God”

- President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) expressed gratitude for the Savior’s role in fulfilling the Atonement: “Thanks be to God for the wonder and the majesty of His eternal plan. Thank and glorify His Beloved Son, who, with indescribable suffering, gave His life on Calvary’s cross to pay the debt of mortal sin. He it was who, through His atoning sacrifice, broke the bonds of death and with godly power rose triumphant from the tomb. He is our Redeemer, the Redeemer of all mankind. He is the Savior of the world. He is the Son of God, the Author of our salvation” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 69; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 51).

2 Nephi 9:15–16. “They Who Are Filthy Shall Be Filthy Still”

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke about the Final Judgment and the condition of cleanliness we must achieve:

“Many Bible and modern scriptures speak of a final judgment at which all persons will be rewarded according to their deeds or works or the desires of their hearts. But other scriptures enlarge upon this by referring to our being judged by the *condition* we have achieved.

“The prophet Nephi describes the Final Judgment in terms of what we *have become*: ‘And if their works have

been filthiness they must needs *be* filthy; and if they *be* filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God' (1 Nephi 15:33; italics added). Moroni declares, 'He that *is* filthy shall be filthy still; and he that *is* righteous shall be righteous still' (Mormon 9:14; italics added; see also Revelation 22:11–12; 2 Nephi 9:16; Alma 41:13; D&C 88:35). The same would be true of 'selfish' or 'disobedient' or any other personal attribute inconsistent with the requirements of God. Referring to the 'state' of the wicked in the Final Judgment, Alma explains that if we are condemned by our words, our works, and our thoughts, 'we shall not be found spotless; . . . and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God' (Alma 12:14)" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32).

- President Gordon B. Hinckley used the example of pornography to teach this same principle when he



said: "Let any who may be in the grip of this vise get upon their knees in the privacy of their closet and plead with the Lord for help to free them from this evil monster. Otherwise this vicious stain will continue through life and even into eternity. Jacob,

the brother of Nephi, taught, 'And it shall come to pass that when all men shall have passed from this first death unto life, insomuch as they have become immortal, . . . they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still' (2 Nephi 9:15–16)" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 66; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 62).

2 Nephi 9:18. "Endured the Crosses of the World"

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles suggested a meaning for the word *crosses*: "What are the 'crosses of the world'? We cannot be sure, but the imagery suggests the bearing of a cross placed upon us by the world, as Jesus did; there may be persecutors and unhelpful onlookers, and the Church member is set apart (if not set upon), yet he does not flinch when accused and scoffed at by those who would make him ashamed, for he has no

real reason to be ashamed" (*Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward* [1977], 110).

2 Nephi 9:20. God "Knoweth All Things"

- The *Lectures on Faith* teach why the omniscience of God is necessary: "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" ([1985], 51–52).

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained that God must know all things in order to accomplish His work of bringing to pass our immortality and eternal life:

"Those who try to qualify God's omniscience fail to understand that He has no need to avoid ennui [tedium] by learning new things. Because God's love is also perfect, there is, in fact, divine delight in that 'one eternal round' which, to us, seems to be all routine and repetition. God derives His great and continuing joy and glory by increasing and advancing His creations, and not from new intellectual experiences.

"There is a vast difference, therefore, between an omniscient God and the false notion that God is on some sort of post-doctoral fellowship, still searching for additional key truths and vital data. Were the latter so, God might, at any moment, discover some new truth not previously known to Him that would restructure, diminish, or undercut certain truths previously known by Him. Prophecy would be mere prediction. Planning assumptions pertaining to our redemption would need to be revised. Fortunately for us, however, His plan of salvation is constantly *underway*—not constantly *under revision*. . . .

"In a very real sense, all we need to know is that God knows all!" (*All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* [1979], 14–15, 21).

2 Nephi 9:21–24. Everyone Can Be Saved

- President Brigham Young (1801–77) spoke of the extent of the Savior’s efforts to save mankind: “This is the plan of salvation. Jesus will never cease his work until all are brought up to the enjoyment of a kingdom in the mansions of his Father, where there are many kingdoms and many glories, to suit the works and faithfulness of all men that have lived on the earth. Some will obey the celestial law and receive of its glory, some will abide the terrestrial and some the telectual” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 56).



2 Nephi 9:25–26. No Law, No Punishment

- Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained the role of knowledge in our accountability: “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” (*Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [1924], 58).

- President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, clarified the position of those who do not have knowledge of God’s laws:

“Provision is made in the plan for those who live in mortality without knowing of the plan. ‘Where there is no law given there is no punishment; and where there is no punishment there is no condemnation . . . because of the atonement; for they are delivered by the power of him’ (2 Nephi 9:25).

“Without that sacred work of the redemption of the dead, the plan would be incomplete and would really be unfair” (“The Play and the Plan” [CES fireside for young adults, May 7, 1995], 4, www.ldsces.org).

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland described some of those who do not have the gospel law: “In the broad reach of the Atonement, generous provision is made for those who die without a knowledge of the gospel or the opportunity to embrace it, including children under the age of accountability, the mentally impaired, those who never came in contact with the gospel, and so forth” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, 215).

2 Nephi 9:28. “They Think They Are Wise”

- President Gordon B. Hinckley described the weakness of trusting intellect over faith:

“The intellect is not the only source of knowledge. There is a promise, given under the inspiration of the Almighty, set forth in these beautiful words: ‘God shall give unto you knowledge by his holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost’ (D&C 121:26).

“The humanists who criticize us, the so-called intellectuals who demean us, speak only from ignorance of this manifestation. They have not heard the voice of the Spirit. They have not heard it because they have not sought after it and prepared themselves to be worthy of it. Then, supposing that knowledge comes only of reasonings and of the workings of the mind, they deny that which comes by the power of the Holy Ghost. . . .

“Do not be trapped by the sophistry of the world, which for the most part is negative and which seldom, if ever, bears good fruit. Do not be ensnared by those clever ones whose self-appointed mission it is to

demean that which is sacred, to emphasize human weakness, and undermine faith, rather than inspire strength” (“Be Not Afraid, Only Believe” [CES fireside for young adults, Sept. 9, 2001], 4, www.ldsces.org).

2 Nephi 9:29. “To Be Learned Is Good”

- President Gordon B. Hinckley described the good that comes from learning all we can: “You face great challenges that lie ahead. You are moving into a world of fierce competition. You must get all of the education you can. The Lord has instructed us concerning the importance of education. It will qualify you for greater opportunities. It will equip you to do something worthwhile in the great world of opportunity that lies ahead. If you can go to college and that is your wish, then do it. If you have no desire to attend college, then go to a vocational or business school to sharpen your skills and increase your capacity” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 70; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 49–50).

2 Nephi 9:34. “Wo unto the Liar”

- Second Nephi 9:34 and several other scriptures teach the seriousness of the sin of lying (see Proverbs 6:16–19; D&C 63:17–18; 76:98, 103). President James E. Faust (1920–2007) explained the meaning of telling the truth:

“We believe in being honest [Articles of Faith 1:13]. . . .

“We all need to know what it means to be honest. Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth telling, truth speaking, truth living, and truth loving. . . .

“. . . Honesty is a moral compass to guide us in our lives. . . .

“Honesty is a principle, and we have our moral agency to determine how we will apply this principle. We have the agency to make choices, but ultimately we will be accountable for each choice we make. We may deceive others, but there is One we will never deceive. From the Book of Mormon we learn, ‘The keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name’ [2 Nephi 9:41].

“There are different shades of truth telling. When we tell little white lies, we become progressively color-blind. It

is better to remain silent than to mislead. The degree to which each of us tells the whole truth and nothing but the truth depends on our conscience. . . .

“. . . As President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, ‘Let the truth be taught by example and precept—that to steal is evil, that to cheat is wrong, that to lie is a reproach to anyone who indulges in it’ (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 57–61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 41–44).

2 NEPHI 9:29–38

What sins did Jacob warn us of? What makes each of these sins so serious?

2 Nephi 9:41. Christ Is the “Keeper of the Gate”

- President James E. Faust discussed the value of knowing that one day we will stand before the Savior to account for our lives: “I recall a study some years ago that was made to determine what influences keep young people moving on the straight and narrow track. Of course there were several critical influences. All were important. They included the influence of parents, priesthood advisers, Young Women advisers, Scoutmasters, and peer association. But I was surprised to find that one golden thread of singular importance ran through this study. It was the belief that one day each of us would have to account for our actions to the Lord. Many believed that ‘the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name’ [2 Nephi 9:41]. Those who had an eternal perspective had an extra amount of spiritual strength and resolve. Feeling a personal accountability to the Savior for our actions and stewardships and responding to it provide a profound spiritual protection” (“Who Do You Think You Are?” *New Era*, Mar. 2001, 6–7).

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell described a reassuring aspect to the principle that Jesus Himself and no other will be the final Judge: “Jacob, in 2 Nephi 9:41, in speaking of the straight and narrow, reminds us that ‘the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel’ and that Jesus

‘employeth no servant there.’ The emphasis rightly is on the fact that Jesus ‘cannot be deceived.’ There is another dimension of reassurance, too: not only will the ultimate judgment not be delegated in order to serve the purposes of divine justice, but also divine mercy can best be applied by him who knows these things what only he can know—the quiet moments of courage in the lives of his flock, the un-noticed acts of Christian service, the unspoken thoughts which can be ‘credited’ in no other way, except through perfect judgment” (*For the Power Is in Them . . .* [1970], 37).

Elder Maxwell further explained: “The self-assigned gatekeeper is Jesus Christ, who awaits us out of a deep divine desire to *welcome* us as much as to *certify* us; hence, ‘He employeth no servant there.’ (2 Nephi 9:41.) If we acknowledge Him now, He will lovingly acknowledge and gladly admit us then!” (*Notwithstanding My Weakness* [1981], 124).

2 Nephi 9:50–51. “Buy . . . without Money”

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained what it means to “buy . . . without money”: “Salvation is available to all men, not just a select few. Eternal life is not reserved for apostles and prophets, for the saints in Enoch’s day, or for the martyrs of the Christian Dispensation. ‘All mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.’ (Third Article of Faith.) God is no respecter of persons; ‘he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.’ (2 Ne. 26:33.) The eternal call of the Eternal God is: ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price’ (Isa. 55:1), for ‘salvation is free!’ (2 Ne. 2:4.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1971–73], 3:416–17).

2 Nephi 10:3. “Christ . . . Should Be His Name”

- The title *Christ* was revealed to Jacob by an angel. “*Christ* (a Greek word) and *Messiah* (a Hebrew word) mean ‘the anointed.’ Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of

the Father in the spirit (Heb. 1:6; D&C 93:21). He is the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh (John 1:14; 3:16). He is Jehovah (D&C 110:3–4) and was foreordained to his great calling before the creation of the world. Under the direction of the Father, Jesus created the earth and everything on it (John 1:3, 14; Moses 1:31–33)” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Jesus Christ”; see also Bible Dictionary, “Christ,” 633; Topical Guide, “Jesus Christ—Jehovah,” 248).

Hebrew	Greek	English
Messiah	Christ	Anointed One (see Bible Dictionary, “Christ,” 633)
Joshua	Jesus	Savior (see Bible Dictionary, “Jesus,” 713)

2 Nephi 10:6–8. The Scattering and Gathering Is First Spiritual

- Jacob made it clear that iniquity led to the scattering of the Jews (see 2 Nephi 10:6). Similarly, he emphasized the order of the gathering. The Jews, he declared, will be gathered “*when* the day cometh that they shall believe in [Christ]” (v. 7; italics added).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie clarified the reasons the scattering and gathering of all the tribes of Israel are first *spiritual* and second *physical*:

“Why was Israel scattered? The answer is clear; it is plain; of it there is no doubt. Our Israelite forebears were scattered because they rejected the gospel, defiled the priesthood, forsook the church, and departed from the kingdom. They were scattered because they turned from the Lord, worshipped false gods, and walked in all the ways of the heathen nations. They were scattered because they forsook the Abrahamic covenant, trampled under their feet the holy ordinances, and rejected the Lord Jehovah, who is the Lord Jesus, of whom all their prophets testified. Israel was scattered for apostasy. . . .

“What, then, is involved in the gathering of Israel? The gathering of Israel consists in believing and accepting and living in harmony with all that the Lord once offered his ancient chosen people. It consists of having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of repenting, of being

baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of keeping the commandments of God. It consists of believing the gospel, joining the Church, and coming into the kingdom. . . . And it may also consist of assembling to an appointed place or land of worship” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 515).

- Elder Russell M. Nelson emphasized the importance of the doctrine of the gathering: “This doctrine of the gathering is one of the important teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord has declared, ‘I give unto you a sign . . . that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion’ [3 Nephi 21:1]. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is a sign to the entire world that the Lord has commenced to gather Israel and fulfill covenants He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob [see Genesis 12:2–3; 26:3–4; 35:11–12]. We not only teach this doctrine, but we participate in it. We do so as we help to gather the elect of the Lord on both sides of the veil” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 84; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 80).

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained where the Saints should gather:

“[The] revealed words speak of . . . congregations of . . . covenant people of the Lord in every nation, speaking every tongue, and among every people when the Lord comes again. . . .

“The place of gathering for the Mexican Saints is in Mexico; the place of gathering for the Guatemalan Saints is in Guatemala; the place of gathering for the Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; and so it goes throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth. . . . Every nation is the gathering place for its own people” (in Conference Report, Mexico and Central America Area Conference 1972, 45).

- For more information on the scattering of Israel, refer to “Brief History of the Scattering of Israel” in the appendix (p. 415). For more information on the gathering of Israel, refer to “The Gathering of Israel” in the appendix (p. 416).

2 NEPHI 10:11–14

What are some of the characteristics of liberty?

2 Nephi 10:20–22. Separated from Their Brethren

- Jacob taught that God led various members of the house of Israel to other areas of the world from time to time and referred to them as “brethren” (see 2 Nephi 10:20–21). They were brethren both by lineage and belief. The Lord has a purpose for all of these branches and knows where each group is. The Book of Mormon speaks of at least three such colonies: Lehi’s group, the Jaredites (as recorded in the book of Ether), and the Mulekites (see Mosiah 25:2; Helaman 6:10; 8:21). Undoubtedly, there are others we are not aware of, such as the lost tribes from the ancient kingdom of northern Israel and possibly other groups led elsewhere (see Jacob 5:20–25).

Points to Ponder

- In what ways can you help in the gathering of the Lord’s people?
- Why is it important to realize that Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice applies to you as an individual? What can you do to deepen your understanding of the Lord’s Atonement?
- How can you know if your life is pleasing to the Lord?
- Why do you think the Atonement needed to be infinite?

Suggested Assignments

- Read and think about 2 Nephi 9:4–7, contemplating how the Atonement frees us from both physical and spiritual death.
- In 2 Nephi 10 is a description of a nation with great promises to be raised up in the latter days. Find descriptions of that nation mentioned in chapter 10.
- Describe what must happen before the ultimate redemption of the house of Israel takes place as described in 2 Nephi 10.