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## *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon - Third Nephi, The Book of Nephi, The Son of Nephi, who was the Son of Helaman*

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**Abstract:** This work consists of a rather comprehensive commentary on the verses of the Book of Mormon. I believe it may be read and enjoyed by the casual student of the Book of Mormon who might, for example, find use for it as a reference source. The book's intended purpose, however, is to assist the serious student who would like to begin a thorough, intensive, and searching tour through the book.

# Learning to Love the Book of Mormon

Updated August 2013 to February 2014

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## Introduction

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In the Church, our study and understanding of the Book of Mormon has undergone a most interesting evolution since the book's translation in 1829. As late as the early twentieth century our understanding of the book was not far advanced. Almost no serious studies of the book and its contents had been published, and the book was not heavily used in worship service discourse or in gospel instruction. There was even some skepticism about the literal divine origins of the Book within the LDS community, particularly among the more educated. By the mid 1900s, beginning with an acknowledged assumption of the book's divine origins, Sidney B. Sperry, Hugh W. Nibley, John L. Sorenson, and a few others had launched serious scholarly inquiries into the book. In the mid-1970s the rate of publications on Book of Mormon topics began to increase.

The rate of publications on the Book of Mormon particularly soared after President Ezra Taft Benson, soon after his ordination as president and prophet, called the Church to repentance in November of 1985 and at the April General Conference of the Church in 1986. The Church worked the Book of Mormon into the regular cycle of the new correlated curriculum for adults, and church leaders began using the Book of Mormon more frequently and systematically in speeches and instructional situations. Since then, the book's authenticity as an ancient scriptural record has become more firmly and generally established. Those who remain vocal doubters of the book's literal divine origins are no longer identified with the committed LDS community.

In the October General Conference in 1986, President Benson said:

We must make the Book of Mormon a center focus of our study [because] it was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. . . . Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, [Mormon] abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us. . . .

If they [the Book of Mormon writers] saw our day then 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?" (*Conference Report*, October 1986, 3-7).

President Benson would later write:

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 (“The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, November, 1986, 16:7).

Further:

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 (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft] 1988, 51).

President Benson often reiterated the prophet Joseph Smith’s statement when Joseph referred to the Book of Mormon as “the keystone of our religion” (*TPJS*, 194). A keystone, sometimes called the headstone, is the central stone in an arch. It holds all the other stones in place, and if it is removed, the arch crumbles.

Your author has developed the habit, as I read the Book of Mormon, of reading slowly and actually looking for words or phrases or concepts whose meanings are unclear. I search for ideas that are not completely compatible with the framework of knowledge I already possess. I have been surprised to learn that I seldom have to read more than two or three verses before coming upon some puzzlement, large or small. On each occasion, I am left with an unsettled perplexity, a sort of uncomfortable disequilibrium. “Why are there so many verses in this basic scriptural work,” I have wondered, “that cause me to struggle so?” Disquieting as these feelings are, I have come to recognize them as a first step in learning some valuable new insight.

Once I come upon a phrase or verse I don’t understand, I begin my search for the answer by reading and re-reading the “offending” passage, by checking cross references, by reading supplemental explanatory materials, by sometimes asking help of my learned friends, and often praying about the verse. Mercifully, I have found that my efforts are most always fruitful. I am able to re-establish my equilibrium with the verse, and, at the same time, find myself possessing a greater insight on some particular point. With some satisfaction, I then continue on in my reading, only to find the process beginning again a verse or two later. I heartily recommend this same approach to my readers, and I have attempted in this commentary to spare you some of the pain of finding your answers. I hope I have anticipated many of your perplexities as you study the Book of Mormon, yet I suspect that each of us will encounter and be obliged to overcome our own unique set of questions. There is certainly a magic in enduring in this process, for certainly as we do so, we are “treasur[ing] up . . . the words of life” (D&C 84:85).

Your author prefers to think of this work as an “enrichment commentary.” I believe it may be read and enjoyed by the casual student of the Book of Mormon who might, for example, find use for it as a reference source. The book’s intended purpose, however, is to assist the serious student who would like to begin a thorough, intensive, and searching tour through the book. Though it may be useful to the student who wishes to skip from one verse here to another verse there, it is intended to be read sequentially. Some concepts discussed in earlier verses in the book or even earlier verses in a particular chapter may receive more casual attention when encountered later in the text.

This work consists of a rather comprehensive commentary on the verses of the Book of Mormon. Some may have reservations about the basic concept of this book. I am aware of Peter’s warning: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men: but Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21). I have endeavored in this project not to add or detract from the scripture, but only clarify. Some will say that such a comprehensive commentary is not possible without placing a “private interpretation” on some verses. I have earnestly attempted to avoid assigning any purely individual or private interpretations to the scriptural verses. Your author is a student of the Book of Mormon and in no wise an expert. To create this volume I have prayerfully studied and utilized the thoughts and explanations of many authors and scholars whose explanations of the Book of Mormon verses might be generally considered to be “authoritative” and “scholarly.” I have collected materials from general authorities and from individuals with undeniable scholarly credentials who openly profess a spiritual witness of the book. When I have borrowed their ideas only, and have rephrased them for my purposes, no reference will be cited. When I have quoted another author’s wording, acknowledgment is provided. Indeed, I have begun and completed this project as a student who is simply trying to make it possible for myself and for others to understand the book’s sometimes difficult verses. I acknowledge the fact, however, that my private biases have not been completely eliminated.

I am also sensitive to the need to avoid proof-texting in a work such as this. That is, I have tried very hard to let the scriptures speak for themselves. An author guilty of proof-texting presupposes the doctrine and then seeks support from the scriptures. I have attempted to consider each verse in its historical and sequential context.

I have tried to include timely and necessary background information to make the book’s words, phrases, and verses really come alive. I have tried to avoid rhetoric and concentrate on the meat. It is not my purpose to preach about the principles contained in the book, rather my goal is to improve understanding. This work presupposes, in its reader, an “average” understanding of the Book of Mormon. I have tried to eliminate those commentary materials which would likely be redundant and unnecessary for my

so-called average reader. It is my intent to explain, clarify, and enrich your study and understanding of the book.

The work includes a variety of “supplemental articles” to which reference is made appropriately in the text. Among these supplemental articles is a purely historical telling of the Book of Mormon story entitled, *A Narrative Summary of the Book of Mormon*. From this “historical” summary, doctrinal materials have been omitted, but all characters, events, and places are included. It is hope that this historical account may be useful to the student who wishes to quickly “brush up” on the historical narrative.

A few “housekeeping” notes about this work are pertinent. The text of the Book of Mormon is included in bold with a blue color to clearly distinguish it from the commentary. All commentary is colored black. The paragraphs of commentary material are often preceded by a quoted phrase, also of blue color, without any punctuation except for quotation marks. These are phrases taken directly from the verse of text immediately above the commentary paragraph. The commentary then follows these quoted phrases. Sometimes the verse commentary for a group of verses will precede, rather than follow, the actual text rendering of the verses. This is done if it felt that a word of explanation before reading a passage would be helpful. Most block quotes appear in red print and are not double-indented. Finally, in this current updated version of this commentary (2014) page numbers have been eliminated, as they are considered unnecessary.

In reading the Book of Mormon, often we tend to regard some of the materials contained therein as non-essential. We wonder, “Why was the report of this battle or that incident included in the book?” As we study the book, we will assume that there is no “filler” material in the Book of Mormon. Every item in the book was placed there for a reason and purpose. In making his abridgment of the sacred records of the Book of Mormon people, Mormon wrote, “I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people” (Words of Mormon 1:5). Hence, we must assume that all items in the book have been included following thoughtful and inspired consideration.

There is a miracle in the scriptures. If a person reads the scriptures regularly, he or she will invariably have his or her life touched by them eventually. “Whosoever believeth on my words,” the Lord said in reference to the Book of Mormon, “them will I visit with the manifestation of my Spirit” (D&C 5:16). Isaiah prophesied that the Book of Mormon would bring a spiritually blind generation to an understanding of the doctrine of Christ (2 Nephi 27:35; Isaiah 29:24). It has been suggested by those experienced in gospel study that no individual who studies the scriptures daily will be remiss in keeping the commandments.

Our scriptures advise us of several other books of scripture yet to come forth. One day, “all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been . . . and which ever will be” (2 Nephi 27:11). Perhaps, though, we will never be privileged to receive additional scriptures until we learn to appreciate fully those we already have.



Consider the following testimony of The Book of Mormon by President Ezra Taft Benson:

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 that 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” (*Conference Report*, October 1984, 7; *Ensign* November 1984, 8).

I am deeply committed to the book as an authentic ancient scripture. The Spirit has born witness to my soul on numerous occasions as I have studied and pondered its verses. I know with all my heart that the book was written by ancient prophets who intended for their writings to come forth to the world and be translated in our day by Joseph Smith, Jr., through the “gift and power of God.”

Michael J. Preece

**Third Nephi**  
**The Book of Nephi**  
**The Son of Nephi, who was the Son of Helaman**

**And Helaman was the son of Helaman, who was the son of Alma, who was the son of Alma, being a descendant of Nephi who was the son of Lehi, who came out of Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, the king of Judah.**

The original author of the book of Third Nephi is Nephi who will become the chief disciple of Jesus. The prophet Mormon also contributed.

**Chapter Outline of 3 Nephi**

A brief outline of the book of 3 Nephi, worth committing to memory, is as follows:

**3 Nephi 1** Signs of Christ's birth—"At the going down of the sun there was no darkness."

**3 Nephi 3-4** The Nephites gather themselves together to defend themselves against the Gadianton band led by Giddianhi and then Zemnarihah. The Nephites are led by the Chief Judge Lachoneus and the military captain Gidgiddoni. The Gadianton band is eventually defeated. Zemnarihah is hanged from a tree, and then the tree is felled.

**3 Nephi 8** Signs of Christ's crucifixion—great destruction throughout the land.

**3 Nephi 9-10** The Lord's voice is heard out of the darkness following the period of destruction at the time of the Savior's crucifixion.

**3 Nephi 11-28** Christ's Ministry Among the Nephites at Bountiful

**3 Nephi 12-14** Jesus's Sermon at the Temple in Bountiful

**3 Nephi 20** Isaiah 52

**3 Nephi 22** Isaiah 54

**3 Nephi 24 and 25** The prophet Malachi on tithing (Malachi 3) and the return of Elijah (Malachi 4)

**3 Nephi 28** The three Nephites are allowed to tarry.

**3 Nephi Chapter 1**

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**Scripture Mastery**

**3 Nephi 1** The signs of Christ's birth—"At the going down of the sun there was no darkness."

**1 Now it came to pass that the ninety and first year had passed away and it was six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem; and it was in the year that Lachoneus was the chief judge and the governor over the land.**

**verse 1** The two methods of Nephite chronological reckoning are mentioned here. We will learn that there will be yet a third method.

For over five hundred years after the arrival of the Lehi and his extended family in the New World, the only reference date for their dating was the date of Lehi's departure from Jerusalem (2 Nephi 5:28, 34). We may easily connect this date to biblical chronology since Lehi's family likely departed Jerusalem in the first month of 587 BC (Randall P. Spackman, "Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology: The Principal Prophecies, Calendars, and Dates," a FARMS reprint). See the commentary for 1 Nephi 10:4. This first era continued for 609 years before it was terminated. The second major reference date was the date when Alma the younger began to preside as the first chief judge of the people which was about ninety-one years before the birth of Christ. This second era is referred to as "the year of the reign of the judges." It was supplementary in that it was utilized concomitantly with the aforementioned system, and both eras ran simultaneously. This era continued for one-hundred years before it was terminated. Yet another era will begin nine years after the signs of the Messiah's birth were seen, "the Nephites began to reckon their time from this period when the sign was given, or from the coming of Christ" (3 Nephi 2:5-8). The first two eras were brought to a close at the inception of this third era.

**"it was six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem"** We will learn later in this chapter that the Savior's birth will take place during this year. This six hundred year period between the departure of Lehi's family from Jerusalem and the birth of the Savior has been discussed previously in the commentary for 1 Nephi 10:4. For the convenience of the reader, we will repeat that discussion here:

There is a problem with this "six hundred years" since Lehi and his family probably left Jerusalem in 587 BC and the Savior was likely born between 4 and 6 BC. Six hundred years from 587 BC would be AD 13. Randall P. Spackman in his helpful article "Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology: The Principal Prophecies, Calendars, and Dates," (a FARMS reprint) has provided us with a compelling explanation of the problem: The principal time-keeping system throughout the Middle East in the sixth century BC was a twelve-moon lunar calendar. By this calendar a year lasted 354.367 days. The principle of the solar calendar was also understood in which a year lasted 365.24 days, but the twelve-moon lunar calendar continued in use as the principal Babylonian, Egyptian, and Jewish religious calendar throughout ancient history. These religious calendars appear to have been based on direct observation of the moon by the priests to determine the times of religious festivals. "The priests also recognized that the solar year . . . was about eleven days longer than the twelve-moon calendar. For purposes of seasonal or agricultural rituals, the priests probably added or "intercalated" a 13th moon every two or three years. This was not an exact process in the time of Lehi, but it was an ancient one. Accurate intercalation schedules for adding the 13th moon were not worked out in Babylonia until the fifth century BC. In Lehi's day

in Jerusalem, a 13th moon was added to the year when it became clear that the religious festivals were starting to occur too early in the agricultural or seasonal cycle” (Spackman, 15).

Brother Spackman feels it unlikely that Lehi and his people ever tried to intercalate their calendar. Thus, their year was slightly over 354 days long. Brother Spackman also makes a compelling argument for the fact that Lehi and his family probably left Jerusalem in January 587 BC according to our present-day Gregorian calendar. Lehi would probably have begun his 600-year count on the first new moon day that followed his departure. The date of that new moon was January 19, 587 BC. He apparently began the count as he camped in the wilderness. Lehi’s righteous posterity kept this year count and were taught expressly to look forward to the birth of the Savior in 600 years by this lunar calendar. After 600 years or 7,200 moons, the 601st year of Lehi’s prophetic period would have begun with the new moon of March 8, 5 BC. In the “commencement” of this long-awaited year, the sign of the Messiah’s birth was seen in the heavens and he was born at Bethlehem probably in the spring of 5 BC.

If the Savior was born in the period of 4 to 6 B.C., how is it that our current system of dating does not coincide with this date? How could there have been such a significant mistake in dating such an important event such as the Savior’s birth? After all, our present BC–AD system is based upon that very event. Dr. John L. Sorenson has pointed out that: “The year of the Savior’s birth did not become significant to the calendar used in Europe until centuries after the event. The monk Dionysius Exiguus calculated the date soon after AD 500, but he made a mistake, mainly due to the inadequate historical materials available. So Christ was not born in 1 BC, neither in AD 1, but probably in 4 or 5 BC, or a bit earlier still” (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 272).

**“Lachoneus was the chief judge and the governor over the land”**  
Lachoneus may have become the chief judge in this particular year. If so, he will serve as chief judge and governor for about thirty years and be succeeded by his son, also named Lachoneus (3 Nephi 6:19).

**2 And Nephi, the son of Helaman, had departed out of the land of Zarahemla, giving charge unto his son Nephi, who was his eldest son, concerning the plates of brass, and all the records which had been kept, and all those things which had been kept sacred from the departure of Lehi out of Jerusalem.**

**verse 2 “and all those things which had been kept sacred from the departure of Lehi out of Jerusalem”** This phrase refers to those sacred relics that served as symbols of authority to the possessor (see Alma 50:38 and its commentary). In addition to the plates of brass, the small plates of Nephi, and the large collection of plates referred to as the large plates of Nephi, these relics included the sword of Laban, the Urim and Thummim, the breast plate, and the director or Liahona.

The succession of righteous prophets or keepers of the plates from King Benjamin to the son of Nephi can seem a bit confusing. It is, however very simple. Let us briefly review this succession:

1. Benjamin delivers the plates to his son Mosiah who becomes the final Nephite king (124 BC).

2. Mosiah places them in the possession of Alma's son, Alma the younger (92 BC). This Alma had been converted miraculously and later becomes the first chief judge of the people. He eventually gives up the office of chief judge to spend full time in his other office of high priest of the people.

3. Alma passes the plates along to his son, Helaman (74 BC) who valiantly leads the two thousand stripling warriors at the same time that captain Moroni is leading the Nephite army in other parts of the land.

4. The plates eventually end up in the possession of Helaman's son Helaman, but prior to that, they are held for a four-year period by the older Helaman's brother, Shiblon (57 to 53 BC). The younger Helaman writes the large part of the book of Helaman, serves as a righteous chief judge in Zarahemla, and sees the rise of the Gadianton robbers.

5. Helaman hands the plates on to his son Nephi (39 BC) who, with his brother Lehi, preaches valiantly and converts thousands of Lamanites. At one point Nephi and his brother are protected from destruction in a Lamanite prison by a miraculous protective ring of fire. Nephi later preaches from his garden tower and miraculously predicts the murder of the chief judge Seezoram.

6. Nephi disappears mysteriously, but not before he delivers the plates to his son Nephi (1 AD), who is the prophet during the time of great wickedness between the time of the Savior's birth and the Lord's appearance at the temple in Bountiful. Nephi eventually becomes one of the Lord's twelve disciples or apostles.

As long as we are at it, we might as well complete this list of plate keepers.

7. Nephi is succeeded by his son, also named Nephi. This Nephi dies in 111 AD.

8. The record is then kept by his son Amos. Amos keeps the record for eighty-four years and dies in 194 AD.

9. Amos gives the record to his son also named Amos. This Amos dies in 305 AD.

10. Amos's brother Ammaron keeps the record in his stead. In 320 AD Ammaron is constrained by the Holy Ghost to hide all the sacred records in a hill called Shim. After hiding the records, Ammaron is inspired to approach a boy named Mormon who is ten years old at the time and command him that when he reaches the age of twenty-four, Mormon should remove from their hiding place the large plates of Nephi and take possession of them.

11. Mormon does so in 335 AD. Years later, Mormon abridges the large plates of Nephi onto another set of plates, the plates of Mormon (380 AD). Mormon is

eventually slain by Lamanites in about 385 AD. Before his death he buries the large plates of Nephi in the hill Cumorah.

12. Mormon gives to his son Moroni the small plates of Nephi and the plates of Mormon. These plates will be combined into a single set with the plates of Mormon at the front and the small plates of Nephi at the back. This set will eventually be delivered to Joseph Smith Jr. just after midnight in the early morning hours of September 22, 1827.

### **3 Then he departed out of the land, and whither he went, no man knoweth; and his son Nephi did keep the records in his stead, yea, the record of this people.**

**verse 3** Although the text never explains the fate of the prophet Nephi, it seems possible and even likely that he was translated. For a summary of the accomplishments of this remarkable prophet, see the commentary for Helaman 10:4-7. This verse is reminiscent of Alma 45:18 which relates the fate of Alma the younger, the great-grandfather of Nephi: “He departed out of the land of Zarahemla . . . and it came to pass that he was never heard of more; as to his death or burial we know not of.” Terrence L. Szink has pointed out the remarkable similarities in the lives of Alma the younger and Nephi:

Nephi and Alma in fact led very similar lives. Among other things both were judges (Nephi—Helaman 3:37; Alma—Mosiah 29:42-44), both gave up their judgeship to devote more time to service in the church (Nephi—Helaman 5:1-4; Alma—Alma 4:20), and, finally, weary with the wickedness of their people, both wished for something different than the circumstances in which they found themselves: Nephi wanted to live in the days when Lehi and his family left Jerusalem (Helaman 7:7), and Alma wanted to speak with the voice of an angel (Alma 29:1-3) (*Studies in Scripture, Volume Eight, Alma 30 to Moroni*, 136).

Three additional Nephite apostles will yet be translated in the remaining pages of the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 28). For a discussion of the doctrine of translated beings, see *Doctrine of Translation in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 17.

### **4 And it came to pass that in the commencement of the ninety and second year, behold, the prophecies of the prophets began to be fulfilled more fully; for there began to be greater signs and greater miracles wrought among the people.**

### **5 But there were some who began to say that the time was past for the words to be fulfilled, which were spoken by Samuel, the Lamanite.**

### **6 And they began to rejoice over their brethren, saying: Behold the time is past, and the words of Samuel are not fulfilled; therefore, your joy and your faith concerning this thing hath been vain.**

**verse 6** “they began to rejoice over their brethren” This rejoicing was a negative gloating by the antagonistic unbelievers rather than a positive emotion.

**7 And it came to pass that they did make a great uproar throughout the land; and the people who believed began to be very sorrowful, lest by any means those things which had been spoken might not come to pass.**

**verse 7** This verse is a poignant reminder that here in mortality even the faithful depend on faith and hope that in the due time of the Lord, all will be revealed and they will be vindicated in their beliefs.

**8 But behold, they did watch steadfastly for that day and that night and that day which should be as one day as if there were no night, that they might know that their faith had not been vain.**

**verse 8** The reader will recall that the prophet Samuel the Lamanite had predicted that “there shall be one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night; and this shall be unto you for a sign; for ye shall know of the rising of the sun and also of its setting” (Helaman 14:4).

**9 Now it came to pass that there was a day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death except the sign should come to pass, which had been given by Samuel the prophet.**

**verse 9** “all those who believed in those traditions” We have encountered the word “traditions” on many occasions in the Book of Mormon, yet we have not taken the time to define it. It refers to the customs, beliefs, and stories that are handed down from generation to generation either by word of mouth or by written records.

A common characteristic of the unbeliever is set forth in this verse. Since they do not believe or know or feel, they conclude that no one else can believe or know or feel. Since they were the powerful majority, they could calendar this awful ultimatum.

Brother Hugh Nibley commented on this intent of the non-believers to put to death the believers if the foretold events did not occur by a certain date:

It was the overwhelming majority of unbelievers who actually set a date for a general massacre of those who expected the coming of Christ (3 Nephi 1:9, 16). Fantastic as this may seem, it has many parallels in history: the slaughter of the Magi in Lehi’s day, the Sicilian Vespers, the liquidation of the Mamlukes, St. Bartholomew’s, the slaughter of the Donatists, the Bloodbath of Stralsund, etc., most of them attempts at the complete wiping out of large unorthodox minorities, and most of them engineered by devout intellectuals. It is a grim and authentic psychological touch in the Book of Mormon (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 6, 370).

**10 Now it came to pass that when Nephi, the son of Nephi, saw this wickedness of his people, his heart was exceedingly sorrowful.**



**11 And it came to pass that he went out and bowed himself down upon the earth, and cried mightily to his God in behalf of his people, yea, those who were about to be destroyed because of their faith in the tradition of their fathers.**

**verse 11** “he went out and bowed himself down upon the earth” In commenting upon the subject of *obeisance* (bowing down or showing deference), Elder Bruce R. McConkie, wrote:

Obeisance . . . is a true and proper part of the worship of the Eternal King. Faithful people have always bowed down when worshipping the Lord (Genesis 24:52; Numbers 22:31). Prayer is properly made on bowed knees (Alma 46:13; Helaman 7:10; 3 Nephi 1:11). Nephi the disciple bowed himself before Jesus (3 Nephi 11:19), who in turn bowed himself before the Father (3 Nephi 19:19, 27). In mocking desecration of sacred worship, the tormentors of our Lord bowed before him as they “platted a crown of thorns” upon his head (Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:19). There is a coming day when every knee shall bow to Christ (D&C 76:110), even as “all things bow in humble reverence” before the Father (D & C 76:93) (*Mormon Doctrine*, 541).

What a joy it will be to one day bow ourselves in adoration before our Savior!

We have often discussed the Lamanites’ incorrect traditions of their fathers. The reader must keep in mind that the Nephites also had a set of unwritten and correct traditions which were handed down (see the commentary for Enos 1:14).

**12 And it came to pass that he cried mightily unto the Lord, all that day; and behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying:**

**13 Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets.**

**verses 12-13** These interesting verses have caused some to ask the question: “How was Jesus able to speak to Nephi? Nephi’s prayer was offered the day prior to Christ’s mortal birth. Was his spirit not, therefore, in Mary’s womb waiting to be born? When does the spirit enter the body? At conception? At the time of quickening? At birth? Might the physical presence of the spirit come and go from the womb?” We are obviously not given to know the answers to these questions. It is not difficult to imagine that the Holy Ghost himself or an angel messenger might have been commissioned to speak to Nephi the words of Christ. We are taught in latter day scripture that all the Lord’s words will be fulfilled “whether [they are spoken] by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

**14 Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because**



**of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given.**

**verse 14 “I come unto my own”** Jesus will come unto his own people the Jews to fulfill all the prophecies made of him and to fulfill the law of Moses.

**“from the foundation of the world”** This phrase refers to man’s premortal existence or first estate.

**“to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh”** How are we to interpret this rather enigmatic statement of the Lord’s? Three interpretations are suggested:

1. It would seem that Jesus is saying that here in mortality, he will do the will of, or be answerable to, two individuals: to his Father, Elohim, and to himself. The Father and the Son, of course, are of one mind. If he does the will of one then he does also the will of the other. Yet, here he seems to draw a subtle contrast between doing the will of the Father and doing the will of the Son. The contrast between the phrases “because of me” and “because of my flesh” suggests an intended contrast between the spirit and the flesh. Perhaps he is suggesting that as he takes upon himself mortality he will be, just as are the rest of us, subject both to the influences of the Spirit and to influences of the flesh—at least he will know and understand both through his personal experiences here on earth. His spirit will be answerable to the Father—“to do the will . . . of the Father because of me [my spirit’s responding to the Holy Spirit].” He himself, and no one else, will be responsible also to keep the pulls of the flesh in check—“to do the will . . . of the Son because of my flesh.”

2. Alternatively, it may be more correct to apply this statement specifically to Christ’s assigned mission to atone for the sins of all mankind. The will of the Father is that the Son pay the demands of justice and thus atone for all men. The Son is uniquely able to accomplish this only “because of me”—because of the divine nature he will receive when he is sired by Elohim. Having that nature will enable him to pay the price and make the atonement. It is also the will of the Son that this atonement be made. This awesome sacrifice, however, can only be effective if it is given willingly and without coercion. The Savior must overcome the pulls of the flesh—the fear, the horror, the apprehension, the uncertainty—and willingly submit himself “because of the flesh,” or in the setting of the pulls of the flesh.

3. Elder Bruce R. McConkie seems to have interpreted this statement as simply Jesus’s teaching that he is both the Father and the Son—that his actions in mortality are in accordance with the will of the Father and the Son because he is both the Father and the Son. Commenting upon the idea that Jesus is “the Father because of me,” Elder McConkie said: “This can only be taken to mean that he was the Father because he had the power of the Father; that his will was swallowed up in the will of the Father; that he could do all things because of his inheritance from that Supreme Being” (*The Promised Messiah*, 371-72). And how was Jesus “the Son because of my flesh”? “It is

clear that he is the Son because of the flesh, meaning that he was born into the world as other mortals are. He had a body that was conceived and nurtured in the womb of a mortal woman (*Ibid.*). Elder McConkie then pointed out that this same thought is put forth in latter-day revelation: “I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men” (D&C 93:3-4).

**15 And it came to pass that the words which came unto Nephi were fulfilled, according as they had been spoken; for behold, at the going down of the sun there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished because there was no darkness when the night came.**

**verse 15** This miraculous interruption of the conventional twenty-four-hour light-dark cycle has been referred to as “a celebration of light” (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, volume 2, “Light and Darkness”).

In contrast, beginning at the crucifixion of Christ and extending for three consecutive days “there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof who had not fallen could feel the vapor of darkness; and there could be no light” (3 Nephi 8:20-21).

**16 And there were many, who had not believed the words of the prophets, who fell to the earth and became as if they were dead, for they knew that the great plan of destruction which they had laid for those who believed in the words of the prophets had been frustrated; for the sign which had been given was already at hand.**

**verse 16** “there were many, who had not believed the words of the prophets, who fell to the earth and became as if they were dead” Undoubtedly these erstwhile non-believers were awe-struck and overcome with fear and consternation over the implications of their now-obvious mistake.

**17 And they began to know that the Son of God must shortly appear; yea, in fine, all the people upon the face of the whole earth from the west to the east, both in the land north and in the land south, were so exceedingly astonished that they fell to the earth.**

**verse 17** “in fine” This phrase may be interpreted as “finally,” “eventually” or “in summary.”

“all the people upon the face of the whole earth” This phrase is a hyperbole which actually is intended to mean “all the people in the lands of Zarahemla and Nephi” or “all the people in the Book of Mormon lands.” The phrase is also likely hyperbolic in

another sense. It seems unlikely that *all* of the former non-believers fell to the earth in humble acknowledgment of their erroneous ways and beliefs.

**18 For they knew that the prophets had testified of these things for many years, and that the sign which had been given was already at hand; and they began to fear because of their iniquity and their unbelief.**

**19 And it came to pass that there was no darkness in all that night, but it was as light as though it was mid-day. And it came to pass that the sun did rise in the morning again, according to its proper order; and they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born, because of the sign which had been given.**

**20 And it had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the prophets.**

**21 And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word.**

**verse 21** Please review the commentary for Helaman 14:5 regarding this “new star.”

**verses 15-21** It is interesting to note that in this description of the fulfillment of the new-star prophecy and in the prophecy itself (Helaman 14:3-6), the sentence order and wording imply that the new star was not the cause of there being no darkness that night. The event is difficult for astronomers to explain by any natural phenomena, and no account of any comparable incident is given by any New Testament writer nor by any other contemporary historical record from the eastern hemisphere. This apparently was a remarkable sign given in the Nephite regions of the world only, though the new star could perhaps be the same observed by the wise men in the New Testament account (Matthew 2:1-2).

**22 And it came to pass that from this time forth there began to be lyings sent forth among the people, by Satan, to harden their hearts, to the intent that they might not believe in those signs and wonders which they had seen; but notwithstanding these lyings and deceivings the more part of the people did believe, and were converted unto the Lord.**

**verse 22** In spite of the best efforts of Satan, these signs had been so powerful that the majority, the “more part,” of the people were converted to the Lord. This conversion, however, will be short-lived. Three years hence the hearts of most of these converts will be hardened again (see 3 Nephi 2:1). See the discussion of hard-heartedness in the commentary for Alma 10:6. Obviously the conversion of these people was superficial. It had, after all, occurred as the result of a miraculous outward sign and required no active work on their part. It should also be noted that before the night without darkness, these people had doubted the other signs as they began to occur. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written on the quality of testimony that results from supernatural signs:

Faith that is based on signs alone is weak and ineffective. It continually demands added and greater signs to keep it alive, and those relying on such visible supernatural guidance soon begin “to be less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from heaven” until they are in danger of disbelieving all they have “heard and seen” (3 Nephi 2:1). Thus, belief based on supernatural experiences is less to be desired than that which stands on its own feet. “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29) (*Mormon Doctrine*, “Signs” 714).

**23** And it came to pass that Nephi went forth among the people, and also many others, baptizing unto repentance, in the which there was a great remission of sins. And thus the people began again to have peace in the land.

**24** And there were no contentions, save it were a few that began to preach, endeavoring to prove by the scriptures that it was no more expedient to observe the law of Moses. Now in this thing they did err, having not understood the scriptures.

**verse 24** One small group believed that since Christ had been born it was no longer necessary to obey the law of Moses. These were most likely a group of sincere believers who had simply misunderstood the scriptures. The law of Moses would actually remain intact until the time of Christ’s resurrection when it would be fulfilled.

**25** But it came to pass that they soon became converted, and were convinced of the error which they were in, for it was made known unto them that the law was not yet fulfilled, and that it must be fulfilled in every whit; yea, the word came unto them that it must be fulfilled; yea, that one jot or tittle should not pass away till it should all be fulfilled; therefore in this same year were they brought to a knowledge of their error and did confess their faults.

**verse 25** “the law was not yet fulfilled, and that it must be fulfilled in every whit” The law of Moses was indeed fulfilled in Christ, but not until after his death and resurrection (3 Nephi 12:18).

**26** And thus the ninety and second year did pass away, bringing glad tidings unto the people because of the signs which did come to pass, according to the words of the prophecy of all the holy prophets.

**27** And it came to pass that the ninety and third year did also pass away in peace, save it were for the Gadianton robbers, who dwelt upon the mountains, who did infest the land; for so strong were their holds and their secret places that the people could not overpower them; therefore they did commit many murders, and did do much slaughter among the people.

**28** And it came to pass that in the ninety and fourth year they began to increase in a great degree, because there were many dissenters of the Nephites who did flee

unto them, which did cause much sorrow unto those Nephites who did remain in the land.

**29** And there was also a cause of much sorrow among the Lamanites; for behold, they had many children who did grow up and began to wax strong in years, that they became for themselves, and were led away by some who were Zoramites, by their lyings and their flattering words, to join those Gadianton robbers.

**verse 29** “many children who did grow up and began to wax strong in years, that they became for themselves” As the children of the Lamanites grew to maturity, they “became for themselves,” or became independent of parental influences and began to make their own decisions.

“they . . . were led away by some who were Zoramites, by their lyings and their flattering words, to join those Gadianton robbers” We previously encountered the Zoramites who were Nephite apostates in Alma 31-35 during the mission of Alma the younger and others to their land to reclaim them from their apostasy and to prevent them from entering into an alliance with the Lamanites. Here we learn that the Zoramites are still dissident and are luring naive young Lamanites to join the Gadianton robbers. We are surprised, yet pleased, to learn that two centuries later the Zoramites will be back in the Nephite fold (see 4 Nephi 1:36).

**30** And thus were the Lamanites afflicted also, and began to decrease as to their faith and righteousness, because of the wickedness of the rising generation.

**verses 27-30** Hugh Nibley comments:

The criminal element took to the hills and there established retreats where they built up strength from dissenters joining them until they were able to reestablish the Gadianton organization. Terrorism was the name of the game. From their secure places they would strike and withdraw, making a special effort to kidnap “especially women and children,” to assure the permanence of their society (Helaman 11:33). At the same time, Zoramite recruiters brought a host of young Nephites into the organization by the prospect of such things as romantic adventure, gaudy makeup, danger, loot, and license to kill (3 Nephi 1:28-30). Soldiers of fortune also flocked to the camps (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 8, 555-56).

## 3 Nephi Chapter 2

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1 And it came to pass that thus passed away the ninety and fifth year also, and the people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from heaven, insomuch that they began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds, and began to disbelieve all which they had heard and seen—

**verse 1** “the people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from heaven” Here is an obvious characteristic of the non-believer, the sinner, the “natural man.” When the influence of the Spirit is withdrawn from an individual and he sinks deep into the worldly mire, he is less and less apt to be impressed by any wonders sent forth from God. He will disavow any thought of heavenly influence and will seek instead naturalistic explanations for any miracle. Another principle is operative here. While miracles or supernatural occurrences may induce faith in those who are blessed to observe them, this faith tends not to be strong and enduring. The faith that endures is developed “precept upon precept; line upon line . . . here a little, [and] there a little” (Isaiah 28:13) over the years of obedience and striving. “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

“hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds” Hardhearted? Spiritually blind? Spiritually deaf? Do all these terms have specific meanings? Elder Bruce R. McConkie has differentiated between spiritual deafness and blindness:

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 Nephi 2:1) (*Mormon Doctrine*, “Deafness,” 184).

To harden one’s heart is to willfully close one’s heart against the Holy Spirit, in rebellion against God, in order to accomplish one’s own will. The resulting hard-heartedness can result in the Spirit’s ceasing to strive with a person and in spiritual death. Hard-heartedness can lead progressively from indulging oneself somewhat in wrongdoing to gross wickedness. Hard-heartedness is associated with complaining or murmuring, unbelief, blindness of mind, anger, impenitence, stiffneckedness, pride and sexual sin, desire for vengeance, abominations, cruelty, and murder. Hard-heartedness restricts spiritual understanding and can eventually lead to “know[ing] nothing” concerning the mysteries of God, and then being “taken captive by the devil” (Alma 12:9-11). It resists the softening action of the Holy Spirit and its attendant virtues, like

meekness, compassion, and humility. It renders one vulnerable to lies, and blind to divine signs and wonders. It flourishes in conditions of ease and prosperity.

**2 Imagining up some vain thing in their hearts, that it was wrought by men and by the power of the devil, to lead away and deceive the hearts of the people; and thus did Satan get possession of the hearts of the people again, insomuch that he did blind their eyes and lead them away to believe that the doctrine of Christ was a foolish and a vain thing.**

**verse 2** For an especially apt specific example of the general rule contained in this verse, flip back to 1 Nephi 16:37-38. In these verses in 1 Nephi, Laman and Lemuel rebel against, and even plot to kill, their brother Nephi and their father Lehi even though these recalcitrant brothers had previously seen an angel who had rebuked them (1 Nephi 3:29-31). It would seem that there's nothing new or original in Satan's techniques in trying to lead astray the family Adam. Why should he change his approaches, when the old ones seem to work so well?

Elder Neal A. Maxwell adds his warning:

How quickly he moves in, even where people have had special spiritual experiences, seeking to get people who have seen signs "To disbelieve all which they had heard and seen" (3 Nephi 2:1-2). The adversary has a better chance to persuade us that what we believe is foolish if we worry about looking foolish in front of our fellow men. We read about the subtleties of the devil and that the adversary persuadeth not one man to do good (Alma 12:4; Moroni 7:17). He cheateth people's souls; and having thus persuaded people that there is no devil, he becomes a shepherd of many (2 Nephi 28:21-22; Alma 5:39) (*Things As They Really Are*, 41-42).

**"thus did Satan get possession of the hearts of the people"** Hugh Nibley commented on the dangerous and chilling power Satan possesses in obtaining control over man:

It is on that principle of opposites that Satan's participation in our lives is to be explained. If we can be "encircled about eternally in the arms of [God's] love" (2 Nephi 1:15), we can also be "encircled about by the bands of death, and the chains of hell, and an everlasting destruction" (Alma 5:7); and if we can be perfectly united in the at-one-ment, we can also be "cast out" (Alma 5:25), separated and split off forever—"their names shall be blotted out . . . the names of the wicked shall not be mingled with the names of my people" (Alma 5:57). When Satan claims you as his, there is indeed a horrible oneness; for he too will embrace you to get power over you: Do "not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom" (2 Nephi 2:29; cf. 1 Nephi 13:29; 2 Nephi 28:19; Alma 8:9). He will hold you in his strong embrace, having a great hold over you (Alma 10:25; 12:17; 27:12; Helaman 16:23). Joseph Smith felt that power, and it was not an



imaginary power at all, a power many have felt since (JS-H 1:16). For he “get[s] possession” of you (3 Nephi 2:2), “for Satan desireth to have you” (3 Nephi 18:18), just as the Lord does. So while on the one hand, God “inviteth and enticeth to do good” and be one with him, so on the other hand Satan “inviteth and enticeth to sin” (Moroni 7:12-13) (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 9, 585).

**“doctrine of Christ”** Again, as a reminder: The “doctrine of Christ,” also called the gospel of Christ (Jacob 7:6; 2 Nephi 31:2, 21), consists of those teachings that, when adhered to, make it possible to return to live eternally in the presence of our heavenly parents and our Savior. This doctrine is the “only way . . . under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 31:21)—it is the only doctrine with the power to save. This doctrine is the gospel or “good news” of the atonement—that it is indeed possible for us to achieve this sublime goal, that of being exalted.

**3 And it came to pass that the people began to wax strong in wickedness and abominations; and they did not believe that there should be any more signs or wonders given; and Satan did go about, leading away the hearts of the people, tempting them and causing them that they should do great wickedness in the land.**

**4 And thus did pass away the ninety and sixth year; and also the ninety and seventh year; and also the ninety and eighth year; and also the ninety and ninth year;**

**5 And also an hundred years had passed away since the days of Mosiah, who was king over the people of the Nephites.**

**verse 5** It was at the death of king Mosiah that the younger Alma became the first chief judge of the people and the years began to be counted according to the “reign of the judges.”

**6 And six hundred and nine years had passed away since Lehi left Jerusalem.**

**7 And nine years had passed away from the time when the sign was given, which was spoken of by the prophets, that Christ should come into the world.**

**8 Now the Nephites began to reckon their time from this period when the sign was given, or from the coming of Christ; therefore, nine years had passed away.**

**verses 5-8** Undoubtedly the reader is by now familiar with the dating references in the Book of Mormon. In case a review would be helpful: The Nephites reckoned their dates by three different events. These were: (1) Lehi’s leaving Jerusalem; (2) the commencement of the reign of the judges which was about 91 BC—sometimes alternatively referred to as the year Mosiah died (Mosiah 29:44-46); and (3) the sign of the birth of Christ (3 Nephi 1:15). See the commentary for 3 Nephi 1:1.



It is a notable irony that the Nephites began to reckon their time from the time of the night without darkness, even though most of them will soon come to doubt the validity of the sign. This is somewhat analogous to our situation today in the western world where time is measured from the birth of Christ, yet many people do not believe in Christ as the Son of God.

For a discussion on the actual birth date of the Savior, see the commentary for 3 Nephi 1:1.

**9 And Nephi, who was the father of Nephi, who had the charge of the records, did not return to the land of Zarahemla, and could nowhere be found in all the land.**

**verse 9** It is interesting that Mormon still had the issue of Nephi's mysterious disappearance on his mind and here he mentions it again "out of the blue," so to speak. We have already discussed the disappearance and probably translation of this Nephi some nine years earlier (3 Nephi 1:3).

**10 And it came to pass that the people did still remain in wickedness, notwithstanding the much preaching and prophesying which was sent among them; and thus passed away the tenth year also; and the eleventh year also passed away in iniquity.**

**11 And it came to pass in the thirteenth year there began to be wars and contentions throughout all the land; for the Gadianton robbers had become so numerous, and did slay so many of the people, and did lay waste so many cities, and did spread so much death and carnage throughout the land, that it became expedient that all the people, both the Nephites and the Lamanites, should take up arms against them.**

**12 Therefore, all the Lamanites who had become converted unto the Lord did unite with their brethren, the Nephites, and were compelled, for the safety of their lives and their women and their children, to take up arms against those Gadianton robbers, yea, and also to maintain their rights, and the privileges of their church and of their worship, and their freedom and their liberty.**

**verse 12** Apparently by now the covenant of pacifism entered into by the Lamanites who were converted by Ammon and his brethren had expired. This covenant not to bear arms had lasted for at least eighty-four years and through a few generations. (Alma 27:21-26; 43:11-12; Alma 24:5-6, 15-19, 20-24; 26:31-34; 44:20; Helaman 5:51; 15:9).

**13 And it came to pass that before this thirteenth year had passed away the Nephites were threatened with utter destruction because of this war, which had become exceedingly sore.**

**14 And it came to pass that those Lamanites who had united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites;**

**15 And their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites;**

**verse 15** Notice that in this verse, the facts of their curse being removed and their skin becoming white were two separate occurrences—“their curse was taken from them, *and* their skin became white” (italics mine). The curse was not the dark skin. Rather the curse was the loss of the Spirit—the spiritual separation from God. The dark skin was only the mark of the curse, and it had previously been prophesied that the mark would be removed from them when they were restored to the Savior and his gospel (2 Nephi 30:6).

For a useful summary of the Lamanites, particularly a consideration of their skin color, see the commentary for Mormon 5:15.

It has been suggested by some that the Lamanites’ dark skin, in the early days of the Book of Mormon story, may have been the natural result of the intermarrying of Laman, Lemuel, and those of their persuasion with the indigenous peoples who were already in the New World on their arrival. This issue is discussed in the commentary for 2 Nephi 5:21-23. There remain some misgivings about the idea that God brought about skin color changes in the Book of Mormon by completely natural means. Here in this verse, for example, it is difficult to see how the Lamanites’ skin could become white in any natural way. Perhaps, however, that when there became no distinction between Nephite and Lamanite, with all the intermarrying that would produce, everyone’s skin would be indistinguishable.

**16 And their young men and their daughters became exceedingly fair, and they were numbered among the Nephites, and were called Nephites. And thus ended the thirteenth year.**

**verse 16** “**they were numbered among the Nephites**” This joining of the Lamanites with the Nephites likely provided a larger and stronger military force as noted in the following verse. We will learn that this advantage, however, is short lived.

**17 And it came to pass in the commencement of the fourteenth year, the war between the robbers and the people of Nephi did continue and did become exceedingly sore; nevertheless, the people of Nephi did gain some advantage of the robbers, insomuch that they did drive them back out of their lands into the mountains and into their secret places.**

**verse 17** “**in the commencement of the fourteenth year**” There is reason to believe that the Nephite year began in the month we call April (3 Nephi 8:5). Thus the “fourteenth year” began in April of AD 14 and ended in March of AD 15.

**18** And thus ended the fourteenth year. And in the fifteenth year they did come forth against the people of Nephi; and because of the wickedness of the people of Nephi, and their many contentions and dissensions, the Gadianton robbers did gain many advantages over them.

**19** And thus ended the fifteenth year, and thus were the people in a state of many afflictions; and the sword of destruction did hang over them, insomuch that they were about to be smitten down by it, and this because of their iniquity.

**verse 19** “the sword of destruction did hang over them” This phrase is Mormon’s colorful way of saying that the Nephite society was on the brink of destruction.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 3

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 3-4** The Nephites gather themselves together to defend themselves against the Gadianton band led by Giddianhi and then Zemnarihah. The Nephites are led by the Chief Judge Lachoneus and the military captain Gidgiddoni. The Gadianton band is eventually defeated. Zemnarihah is hanged from a tree, and then the tree is felled.

Chapter 3 contains a letter that Mormon inserted into the record from Giddianhi, the leader of the Gadianton robbers, to Lachoneus, the governor of the Nephites. Terrence L. Szink has provided us with an interesting comparison between this letter and one written to captain Moroni by Ammoron, a Lamanite king some forty-seven years earlier (Alma 54):

In both letters there is a request for the surrender of the Nephites (Alma 54:18; 3 Nephi 3:6-7), although in the case of Giddianhi, it is more an invitation to Lachoneus to turn the people over to him and join with him in oppressing them. Both opponents claim that they have been wronged and that they have been unjustly deprived of their “rights of government” (Alma 54:17-18; 3 Nephi 3:10). Both letters contain a rejection of God (Alma 54:21-22; 3 Nephi 3:2); and finally, both threaten destruction (Alma 54:20; 3 Nephi 3:3-4).

The differences in the letters demonstrate that in the case of the Gadianton robbers, the Nephites were confronted with an enemy much more sophisticated and dangerous than any previous. . . .

Another difference in the letters is the sophisticated tone of Giddianhi’s message. He repeatedly compliments Lachoneus, referring to him as “most noble,” praises his “firmness” and his “noble spirit in the field of battle.” He claims to be motivated by a feeling for the welfare of the Nephite leader. All this was intended to entice Lachoneus into selling his people out and joining with the robbers, and it is in striking contrast to the direct boldness of Ammoron’s letter. Giddianhi was a “smooth operator,” a man who, although apparently well educated, was entirely without conscience and not to be trusted under any circumstance (*Studies in Scripture, Volume Eight, Alma 30 to Moroni, 128-30*).

Some have seen parallels in our day to the sophisticated Gadianton robbers. Terrence L. Szink has suggested that this parallel may be “the rich and powerful drug trafficking organizations that threaten to destroy our society. They use many of the same tactics and have the same goals as the Gadianton robbers” (*Ibid.*, 130).

We may divide 3 Nephi 3 into two halves:

1. The first half (verses 1-10) illustrates the adversary’s tactics. We read, for example, that he uses flattery, sarcasm, doubt, and skepticism in verse 2; intimidation,

fear, and threats in verse 3; accusation in verse 4; and hypocrisy in verse 5. In verse 6 he uses the false multiple choice dilemma (yield or be destroyed) when we know that these are not the only choices; Satan inevitably leaves out the option of turning to God. In verse 7, he uses entrapment; verse 9, reversal of values—he makes good seem bad and bad seem good; and finally in verse 10 he uses justification or transfer of blame. Evil always seems to justify itself.

2. The second half of chapter 3 illustrates Lachoneus's righteous responses to Giddianhi's evil threats. We may learn important lessons from his responses as we battle the enticings of Satan in our own lives. Lachoneus's responses include don't be afraid (verse 12); decisions based on fear are inevitably bad decisions; pray for strength (verse 12); gather together (verse 13; see also D&C 115:5-6; 101:20-22); build fortifications (verse 14—today our fortifications may be the programs of the Church); place the guards (verse 14—the priesthood is to keep watch over the Church); repent (verse 15); exert oneself to follow the prophet (verse 16) and his apostles (verse 19); don't flirt with danger (verses 20-21); and arm yourself with the whole armor of God (verse 26).

**1 And now it came to pass that in the sixteenth year from the coming of Christ, Lachoneus, the governor of the land, received an epistle from the leader and the governor of this band of robbers; and these were the words which were written, saying:**

**verse 1** Notice that both Lachoneus and Giddionhi have the title of “governor.” Apparently, the titles “chief judge” and “governor” are interchangeable. We have no way of knowing whether or not Lachoneus was a democratically elected “governor.” We are reminded that the Gadianton robbers considered themselves a political organization. They considered their leader, Giddianhi, the head of a government in exile.

**verses 2-10** In his letter, notice how virtuous Giddianhi is, at least in his own judgment. In a parable, the Savior warned us to be cautious about accepting a man's estimate of his own righteousness at face value. When “two men went up into the temple to pray,” one of them proclaimed his righteousness and the other his sinful condition. As it turns out, the self-proclaimed labels were both incorrect (Luke 18:10-14).

**2 Lachoneus, most noble and chief governor of the land, behold, I write this epistle unto you, and do give unto you exceedingly great praise because of your firmness, and also the firmness of your people, in maintaining that which ye suppose to be your right and liberty; yea, ye do stand well, as if ye were**

**supported by the hand of a god, in the defence of your liberty, and your property, and your country, or that which ye do call so.**

**verse 2** Giddianhi is a typical example of the “king-men” in the Book of Mormon. The reader may wish to review the salient features of the “king-men” in the introductory commentary for Alma 46. Please note that though he is one of the king-men, he tries to appear to be one of the “freemen”—particularly in this verse. He speaks strongly for the individual rights and liberty of all people. Hugh Nibley has commented that “the king-men have always made a big thing of sounding like freemen” (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 8, 340-42).

**“ye do stand well, as if ye were supported by the hand of a god”** It is typical for a skeptic to seek for alternate explanations for those occurrences that the faithful would regard as being caused by divine intervention. Elder Boyd K. Packer explained: “One thing is for sure: the skeptic will never know, for he will not meet the requirement of faith, humility, and obedience to qualify him for the visitation of the Spirit” (*That All May Be Edified*, 340).

**verses 3-10** Here Giddianhi delivers his ultimatum. We will learn that Lachoneus did not answer the letter, but prepared his people for battle and eventually defeated the attacking force.

**3 And it seemeth a pity unto me, most noble Lachoneus, that ye should be so foolish and vain as to suppose that ye can stand against so many brave men who are at my command, who do now at this time stand in their arms, and do await with great anxiety for the word—Go down upon the Nephites and destroy them.**

**verse 3 “do await with great anxiety”** Here, of course the word “anxiety” means an earnest and intense desire.

**4 And I, knowing of their unconquerable spirit, having proved them in the field of battle, and knowing of their everlasting hatred towards you because of the many wrongs which ye have done unto them, therefore if they should come down against you they would visit you with utter destruction.**

**5 Therefore I have written this epistle, sealing it with mine own hand, feeling for your welfare, because of your firmness in that which ye believe to be right, and your noble spirit in the field of battle.**

**verses 6-7** Brother Hugh Nibley comments on the “deal” that Giddianhi is about to propose to Lachoneus:

**The chief who signs himself the governor of the Society (verse 9) begins by expressing warm admiration for the Nephite governor’s firmness “in maintaining that which ye suppose to be your right and liberty” (verse 2), showing himself to be a fair-**

mindful and sporting type. In the next verse he is very patronizing—every inch the “big-shot.” “And it seemeth a pity unto me, most noble Lachoneus, that ye should be so foolish and vain as to suppose that ye can stand against so many brave men who are at my command” (verse 3). So, big hearted as he is, the chief proposes a deal, but not until he has first given a little sermon which burns with righteous indignation for the wrongs he and his people have suffered (verse 4). The deal is that Lachoneus, for whose genuine talent and courage the chief again expresses his sincere admiration, is to be taken into the Society, and in return for bringing with him all the property over which his authority extends, he is to be received on a fifty-fifty basis—“not our slaves, but our brethren and partners of all our substance” (verses 6- 7). It was all very high-minded and idealistic. The chief was speaking only in the name of virtue; he was simply giving the other side a break, “feeling for your welfare,” as he so nicely put it (verse 5). If the deal was refused, it would be curtains—“ye shall become extinct” (verse 8). All he is asking for, Giddianhi concludes, is “that this my people may recover their rights and government, who have dissented away from you because of your wickedness in retaining from them their rights of government” (verse 10). And let no one suppose that his followers did not sincerely believe that they were the righteous and offended ones, and their opponents just too wicked to live with (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 6, 391-92).

**6 Therefore I write unto you, desiring that ye would yield up unto this my people, your cities, your lands, and your possessions, rather than that they should visit you with the sword and that destruction should come upon you.**

**7 Or in other words, yield yourselves up unto us, and unite with us and become acquainted with our secret works, and become our brethren that ye may be like unto us—not our slaves, but our brethren and partners of all our substance.**

**verse 7** This is an interesting verse, and it illustrates a fascinating point. The Gadianton band are not simply robbers in the usual sense. Robbers need people to prey upon—they have to have “sheep to shear.” What is the point of inviting everyone to join? If they were simply a band of robbers and everyone joined with them, there would be no one to rob. In fact, the Gadianton adherents are more than just a band of robbers, they are an ideological party. They are called “robbers” by their enemies, but there is more to them than that. They apparently have their own government and their own secret documents and their own secret oaths and covenants.

**8 And behold, I swear unto you, if ye will do this, with an oath, ye shall not be destroyed; but if ye will not do this, I swear unto you with an oath, that on the morrow month I will command that my armies shall come down against you, and they shall not stay their hand and shall spare not, but shall slay you, and shall let fall the sword upon you even until ye shall become extinct.**

**verse 8** It is likely that Giddianhi was sincere and meant what he said here in this verse (see the discussion of oath taking in the commentary for 1 Nephi 4:31-33).

**9 And behold, I am Giddianhi; and I am the governor of this the secret society of Gadianton; which society and the works thereof I know to be good; and they are of ancient date and they have been handed down unto us.**

**verse 9** Note that Giddianhi “bears his testimony” of the ideology of the society of Gadianton. He points to the secret society’s “works” and states that they are venerable, old, and good—indeed, of “ancient date.” We have learned previously that the Gadianton robbers did not obtain their secret oaths and covenants from the twenty-four plates that contained the record of the Jaredites (Alma 37:27,29). Rather they were given to Gadianton “by that same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit” (see Helaman 6:26 and its commentary). These secret oaths were the very essence of the Gadianton society. The penalty for betrayal of these oaths was death. This fact produced a degree of devotion to evil not found among any of the Nephites’ previous enemies.

John L. Sorenson has suggested a practical way in which the secret oaths of the Gadianton society might have been “of ancient date and . . . handed down unto” those in the Gadianton society at the time of Giddianhi:

The Nephite secret combination pattern is obviously very similar to what had been present among the Jaredites. Was there a historical connection? . . . An efficient alternative explanation of how the later secret groups came to look so much like those of the Jaredites is direct transmission of the tradition through survivors of the Jaredites to the people of Zarahemla [the Mulekites] and thus to Gadianton. This process probably would have been unknown to Alma or other elite Nephite writers, who must have had little to do directly with the mass of “Mulekite” folk (*Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There,” 21).

**10 And I write this epistle unto you, Lachoneus, and I hope that ye will deliver up your lands and your possessions, without the shedding of blood, that this my people may recover their rights and government, who have dissented away from you because of your wickedness in retaining from them their rights of government, and except ye do this, I will avenge their wrongs. I am Giddianhi.**

**11 And now it came to pass when Lachoneus received this epistle he was exceedingly astonished, because of the boldness of Giddianhi demanding the possession of the land of the Nephites, and also of threatening the people and avenging the wrongs of those that had received no wrong, save it were they had wronged themselves by dissenting away unto those wicked and abominable robbers.**



**12 Now behold, this Lachoneus, the governor, was a just man, and could not be frightened by the demands and the threatenings of a robber; therefore he did not hearken to the epistle of Giddianhi, the governor of the robbers, but he did cause that his people should cry unto the Lord for strength against the time that the robbers should come down against them.**

**verse 12 “the threatenings of a robber”** Today we would not make much of the difference between the terms *thief* (Hebrew *ganab*) and *robber* (Hebrew *gedud*). However, in Hebrew tradition there was a significant difference. The legal distinctions between theft and robbery, especially under the laws of ancient Israel, have been analyzed by Bernard S. Jackson, professor of law at the University of Kent-Canterbury (*Theft in Early Jewish Law* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972]). A thief was usually a local person who stole from his neighbor. He was tried and punished civilly, most often by a court composed of his fellow townspeople. Robbers, on the other hand, were often outsiders, brigands, highwaymen. They usually acted in organized groups rivaling local governments and attacking towns. They swore oaths and extorted ransom. They were dealt with militarily and could be executed summarily. Thieves, however, were a much less serious threat to society. This distinction seems to be made consistently in the Book of Mormon (John W. Welch, “Theft and Robbery in the Book of Mormon and in Ancient Near Eastern Law,” a FARMS reprint). This explains how Laban could call the sons of Lehi “robbers” and threaten to execute them on the spot without a trial, for that is how a military officer like Laban no doubt would have dealt with a robber. It also explains why the Lamanites are always said to “rob” from the Nephites but never from their own brethren—that would be theft, not robbery. It also explains the rise and fearful menace of the Gadianton society, who are always called “robbers” in the Book of Mormon, never “thieves.” It is also probably no coincidence that the Hebrew word for “band” or “bandits” is *gedud*, and the most famous Book of Mormon robbers were known as *Gadianton’s* “band.”

The importance of this ancient legal tradition in the Book of Mormon is further enhanced by the fact that Anglo-American common law would have provided Joseph Smith with quite a different understanding of the legal definitions of the terms theft and robbery, inconsistent in many ways with the dominant usages found in the Book of Mormon. In ordinary American usage, the two terms are nearly synonymous. Moreover, if Joseph Smith had relied on the language of his King James Bible for legal definitions of these terms, he would have stumbled into error, for that translation uses the English words *thief* and *robber* indiscriminately. For example, the same phrase is translated inconsistently from the Hebrew or Greek of Jeremiah 7:11 as “den of robbers” and yet from the identical Greek in Matthew 21:13 as “den of thieves,” even though Jesus was quoting Jeremiah on that occasion, to say nothing of the fact that thieves do not have dens. In addition, the same word for robbers in the Greek New Testament (*lestai*) is sometimes translated as “thieves” (crucified next to Jesus in Matthew 27:38)

and other times as “robber” (describing Barabbas in John 18:40). Nevertheless, there was indeed an important ancient distinction between thieves and robbers that no translator should neglect, and over which Joseph Smith did not blunder.

**13** Yea, he sent a proclamation among all the people, that they should gather together their women, and their children, their flocks and their herds, and all their substance, save it were their land, unto one place.

**verse 13** “save it were their land” Some have poked harmless fun at this phrase as perhaps being unnecessary.

**14** And he caused that fortifications should be built round about them, and the strength thereof should be exceedingly great. And he caused that armies, both of the Nephites and of the Lamanites, or of all them who were numbered among the Nephites, should be placed as guards round about to watch them, and to guard them from the robbers day and night.

**15** Yea, he said unto them: As the Lord liveth, except ye repent of all your iniquities, and cry unto the Lord, ye will in no wise be delivered out of the hands of those Gadianton robbers.

**verse 15** Lachoneus realized that military preparations were not enough to prepare his people to meet the challenge of the Gadianton robbers.

**16** And so great and marvelous were the words and prophecies of Lachoneus that they did cause fear to come upon all the people; and they did exert themselves in their might to do according to the words of Lachoneus.

**17** And it came to pass that Lachoneus did appoint chief captains over all the armies of the Nephites, to command them at the time that the robbers should come down out of the wilderness against them.

**18** Now the chiefest among all the chief captains and the great commander of all the armies of the Nephites was appointed, and his name was Gidgiddoni.

**19** Now it was the custom among all the Nephites to appoint for their chief captains, (save it were in their times of wickedness) some one that had the spirit of revelation and also prophecy; therefore, this Gidgiddoni was a great prophet among them, as also was the chief judge.

**verse 19** “some one that had the spirit of revelation and also prophecy” We might interpret this as simply one who has lived in such a way that he is deserving of and responsive to the Spirit of the Holy Ghost.

**20** Now the people said unto Gidgiddoni: Pray unto the Lord, and let us go up upon the mountains and into the wilderness, that we may fall upon the robbers and destroy them in their own lands.

**21 But Gidgiddoni saith unto them: The Lord forbid; for if we should go up against them the Lord would deliver us into their hands; therefore we will prepare ourselves in the center of our lands, and we will gather all our armies together, and we will not go against them, but we will wait till they shall come against us; therefore as the Lord liveth, if we do this he will deliver them into our hands.**

**verse 21** Gidgiddoni explains that the Lord has forbidden the Nephites to become the aggressors. Gidgiddoni also may have in mind the practical fact that every time the Nephites have gone up in the mountains of the wilderness, they have been defeated. He then outlines a good counter-guerrilla strategy (see the commentary for Helaman 11:24-25).

**22 And it came to pass in the seventeenth year, in the latter end of the year, the proclamation of Lachoneus had gone forth throughout all the face of the land, and they had taken their horses, and their chariots, and their cattle, and all their flocks, and their herds, and their grain, and all their substance, and did march forth by thousands and by tens of thousands, until they had all gone forth to the place which had been appointed that they should gather themselves together, to defend themselves against their enemies.**

**verse 22 “the proclamation of Lachoneus”** The Nephites are about to assemble enough provisions to last for seven years and gather themselves to an appointed place. The intent of this plan was to literally starve the robbers to death. There is an interesting geographic note that relates to this incident. Note the description of the place of gathering in the next verse. It has been pointed out by Dr. Joseph L. Allen (*Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon*, 37-38) that the mountains between the Chiapas depression (the proposed location of the city of Zarahemla and the River Sidon) and the Coatzacoalcos River (the “line” separating the land Bountiful from the land of Desolation—see the illustration, *Book of Mormon Lands, a Proposed Setting*—are known today as the Lacandone Mountains. The associated valley and the area are called Lacanha. Perhaps the similarity between the name of this area and the name of the great Nephite governor, Lachoneus, is only accidental, but it is also most interesting (see also the commentary for the following verse).

**23 And the land which was appointed was the land of Zarahemla, and the land which was between the land Zarahemla and the land Bountiful, yea, to the line which was between the land Bountiful and the land Desolation.**

**verse 23** We have little information to inform us as to the exact location of this land to which the Nephites with all their resources will gather. This land has to be large enough to accommodate the “great many thousand people who were called Nephites (see the following verse),” yet small enough to have a defendable perimeter and small enough to be besieged by the armies of robbers (3 Nephi 4:7). One might propose a

large but limited area in the northern part of the greater land of Zarahemla between the Sidon basin as it runs true north and the parallel line that separates the land Bountiful from the land of Desolation (see the illustration, *Book of Mormon Lands, A Proposed Setting*. Just how large this land is, the Book of Mormon text does not explain.

**24 And there were a great many thousand people who were called Nephites, who did gather themselves together in this land. Now Lachoneus did cause that they should gather themselves together in the land southward, because of the great curse which was upon the land northward.**

**verse 24** “Lachoneus did cause that they should gather themselves together in the land southward, because of the great curse which was upon the land northward” The “land southward” is in this case in the greater land of Zarahemla. The “land northward” refers to the land Desolation. While your author is not specifically aware of the Lord’s pronouncing a curse upon the land Desolation, it is clear that the Nephites regarded it as a cursed and almost haunted land probably because they had discovered there the ruins and the bones of the destroyed Jaredite nation (see Alma 22:30 and Mosiah 8:8). Hence they gave it the name “Desolation.”

**25 And they did fortify themselves against their enemies; and they did dwell in one land, and in one body, and they did fear the words which had been spoken by Lachoneus, insomuch that they did repent of all their sins; and they did put up their prayers unto the Lord their God, that he would deliver them in the time that their enemies should come down against them to battle.**

**verse 25** The defensive preparations of the Nephites were completed.

**26 And they were exceedingly sorrowful because of their enemies. And Gidgiddoni did cause that they should make weapons of war of every kind, and they should be strong with armor, and with shields, and with bucklers, after the manner of his instruction.**

**verse 26** “and with bucklers” “A buckler is a small shield designed specifically for defense against the sword, but in general it can refer to any type of small shield that is strapped to the forearm” (*Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, edited by Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin, 408-09).

## 3 Nephi Chapter 4

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**1 And it came to pass that in the latter end of the eighteenth year those armies of robbers had prepared for battle, and began to come down and to sally forth from the hills, and out of the mountains, and the wilderness, and their strongholds, and their secret places, and began to take possession of the lands, both which were in the land south and which were in the land north, and began to take possession of all the lands which had been deserted by the Nephites, and the cities which had been left desolate.**

**verse 1** “began to take possession of the lands, both which were in the land south and which were in the land north” It would seem likely that the reference here is only to the greater land of Zarahemla, both its northern and southern parts. It seems likely that the robbers took control of all those parts of the greater land of Zarahemla outside the area where the Nephites and Lamanites were gathered.

**2 But behold, there were no wild beasts nor game in those lands which had been deserted by the Nephites, and there was no game for the robbers save it were in the wilderness.**

**verse 2** Hugh Nibley refers to the robbers as “a predatory order” which found itself in difficult straits because “there was no loot” for them to plunder (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 7, 366-67).

**3 And the robbers could not exist save it were in the wilderness, for the want of food; for the Nephites had left their lands desolate, and had gathered their flocks and their herds and all their substance, and they were in one body.**

**verse 3** The only option open to the robbers was to live hungry and in the wilderness, since the Nephites had abandoned their lands and had left them desolate..

The aim of Lachoneus was to simply sit tight and starve out the Nephites’ former exploiters. In effect, what Lachoneus did was to call a general strike. There would be no one to provide food and other provisions for the robbers.

**4 Therefore, there was no chance for the robbers to plunder and to obtain food, save it were to come up in open battle against the Nephites; and the Nephites being in one body, and having so great a number, and having reserved for themselves provisions, and horses and cattle, and flocks of every kind, that they might subsist for the space of seven years, in the which time they did hope to destroy the robbers from off the face of the land; and thus the eighteenth year did pass away.**

**verse 4** The use of “horses” in this context suggests that whatever animal is referred to as a “horse” here was used largely for food and not to carry or pull things (see the commentary for 1 Nephi 18:25).

**“that they might subsist for the space of seven years”** We will learn that these gathered provisions did, in fact, last seven years from AD 18 to AD 25.

**5 And it came to pass that in the nineteenth year Giddianhi found that it was expedient that he should go up to battle against the Nephites, for there was no way that they could subsist save it were to plunder and rob and murder.**

**verse 5** The Gadianton people were literally parasites whose host was no longer providing food. They were forced into battle.

**6 And they durst not spread themselves upon the face of the land insomuch that they could raise grain, lest the Nephites should come upon them and slay them; therefore Giddianhi gave commandment unto his armies that in this year they should go up to battle against the Nephites.**

**7 And it came to pass that they did come up to battle; and it was in the sixth month; and behold, great and terrible was the day that they did come up to battle; and they were girded about after the manner of robbers; and they had a lamb-skin about their loins, and they were dyed in blood, and their heads were shorn, and they had head-plates upon them; and great and terrible was the appearance of the armies of Giddianhi, because of their armor, and because of their being dyed in blood.**

**8 And it came to pass that the armies of the Nephites, when they saw the appearance of the army of Giddianhi, had all fallen to the earth, and did lift their cries to the Lord their God, that he would spare them and deliver them out of the hands of their enemies.**

**verse 8 “they . . . and did lift their cries to the Lord their God, that he would spare them and deliver them out of the hands of their enemies”** Regarding the pre-battle prayers of the Nephites, Gary L. Sturgess has written:

We do not know what “cry[ing] mightily to the Lord” (Mosiah 9:17) meant, but it occurs so often in this context that we must understand it to be some kind of pre-battle ritual. Alma’s son Helaman wrote to [Captain] Moroni a decade or more after his father’s departure: “We trust God will deliver us, notwithstanding the weakness of our armies, yea, and deliver us out of the hands of our enemies” (Alma 58:37). There would also appear to have been a ritual thanksgiving after a victorious battle in which Jehovah was praised for delivering the people. Alma 45:1 records fasting and prayer, as well as a form of worship that involved great rejoicing, “because the Lord had again delivered them out of the hands of their enemies.” We find this same pattern of deliverance and

rejoicing alluded to in Omni 1:6–7; Alma 49:28–30; 62:48–52; and 3 Nephi 4:28–33 (*Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, volume 4, Number 2, 126).

9 And it came to pass that when the armies of Giddianhi saw this they began to shout with a loud voice, because of their joy, for they had supposed that the Nephites had fallen with fear because of the terror of their armies.

10 But in this thing they were disappointed, for the Nephites did not fear them; but they did fear their God and did supplicate him for protection; therefore, when the armies of Giddianhi did rush upon them they were prepared to meet them; yea, in the strength of the Lord they did receive them.

11 And the battle commenced in this the sixth month; and great and terrible was the battle thereof, yea, great and terrible was the slaughter thereof, insomuch that there never was known so great a slaughter among all the people of Lehi since he left Jerusalem.

12 And notwithstanding the threatenings and the oaths which Giddianhi had made, behold, the Nephites did beat them, insomuch that they did fall back from before them.

13 And it came to pass that Gidgiddoni commanded that his armies should pursue them as far as the borders of the wilderness, and that they should not spare any that should fall into their hands by the way; and thus they did pursue them and did slay them, to the borders of the wilderness, even until they had fulfilled the commandment of Gidgiddoni.

**verse 13** “his armies should pursue them as far as the borders of the wilderness” We might presume that this “wilderness” is an uninhabited mountainous area which is part of the west wilderness that lay between the greater land of Zarahemla and the west sea.

14 And it came to pass that Giddianhi, who had stood and fought with boldness, was pursued as he fled; and being weary because of his much fighting he was overtaken and slain. And thus was the end of Giddianhi the robber.

15 And it came to pass that the armies of the Nephites did return again to their place of security. And it came to pass that this nineteenth year did pass away, and the robbers did not come again to battle; neither did they come again in the twentieth year.

16 And in the twenty and first year they did not come up to battle, but they came up on all sides to lay siege round about the people of Nephi; for they did suppose that if they should cut off the people of Nephi from their lands, and should hem them in on every side, and if they should cut them off from all their outward privileges, that they could cause them to yield themselves up according to their wishes.



17 Now they had appointed unto themselves another leader, whose name was Zemnarihah; therefore it was Zemnarihah that did cause that this siege should take place.

18 But behold, this was an advantage to the Nephites; for it was impossible for the robbers to lay siege sufficiently long to have any effect upon the Nephites, because of their much provision which they had laid up in store,

19 And because of the scantiness of provisions among the robbers; for behold, they had nothing save it were meat for their subsistence, which meat they did obtain in the wilderness;

20 And it came to pass that the wild game became scarce in the wilderness insomuch that the robbers were about to perish with hunger.

21 And the Nephites were continually marching out by day and by night, and falling upon their armies, and cutting them off by thousands and by tens of thousands.

22 And thus it became the desire of the people of Zemnarihah to withdraw from their design, because of the great destruction which came upon them by night and by day.

23 And it came to pass that Zemnarihah did give command unto his people that they should withdraw themselves from the siege, and march into the furthestmost parts of the land northward.

**verse 23** Throughout the Book of Mormon, the Nephite military leaders consistently manifest a reluctance to allow their enemies to flank them and escape to the north. Perhaps they feared the strategic disadvantage of being surrounded, particularly since there may have been peoples in the lands to the north of the narrow neck of land willing to form an alliance with the Nephites' enemies.

24 And now, Gidgiddoni being aware of their design, and knowing of their weakness because of the want of food, and the great slaughter which had been made among them, therefore he did send out his armies in the night-time, and did cut off the way of their retreat, and did place his armies in the way of their retreat.

25 And this did they do in the night-time, and got on their march beyond the robbers, so that on the morrow, when the robbers began their march, they were met by the armies of the Nephites both in their front and in their rear.

26 And the robbers who were on the south were also cut off in their places of retreat. And all these things were done by command of Gidgiddoni.

27 And there were many thousands who did yield themselves up prisoners unto the Nephites, and the remainder of them were slain.

28 And their leader, Zemnarihah, was taken and hanged upon a tree, yea, even upon the top thereof until he was dead. And when they had hanged him until he was dead they did fell the tree to the earth, and did cry with a loud voice, saying:



**29 May the Lord preserve his people in righteousness and in holiness of heart, that they may cause to be felled to the earth all who shall seek to slay them because of power and secret combinations, even as this man hath been felled to the earth.**

**verses 28-29** After the Nephites chopped down the tree on which Zemnarihah was hanged, they all cried out “with one voice” for God to protect them. Then they sang out “all as one” in praise of God (see verses 30-33). It certainly appears that some kind of ritual or legal procedure was involved here, and several evidences point to an ancient and previously unknown background for this form of execution:

1. Notice that the tree used in carrying out the execution was felled. Was this ever done in antiquity? Apparently it was. For one thing, Jewish practice required that the tree upon which the culprit was hanged should be buried with the body, so the tree had to be chopped down. Since the rabbis understood that this burial would take place immediately, the Talmud recommended hanging the culprit on a precut tree or post so that, in the words of Maimonides, “no felling is needed” (Maimonides, Sanhedrin XV, 9; see also Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin VI, 6).

2. Consider why the tree was chopped down and buried. As Maimonides explains: “In order that it should not serve as a sad reminder, people saying: ‘This is the tree on which so-and-so was hanged’” (Maimonides, Sanhedrin XV, 9). In this the tree became associated with the person being executed; it came to symbolize the culprit and the desire to forget him or her. By way of comparison, the Nephites identified the tree with Zemnarihah and all those like him, that his infamy might not be forgotten, when they cried out: “May [the Lord] cause to be felled to the earth all who shall seek to slay them . . . even as this man hath been felled to the earth.”

3. Stoning was the more usual method of execution under the law of Moses. One of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Temple Scroll (also called 11Q19), calls for execution of a spy—one who defects to another nation and curses his own people, or one who “betrays his people to a foreign nation or causes evil against his people”—by hanging (column LXIV, lines 6-13, in Garcia Martinez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 178). The Israelites who joined themselves to their enemies, the Midianites, in the worship of the false god Baal-Peor and were hanged by Moses fit this description of a traitor (see Numbers 25:1-9). The Gadianton band led by Zemnarihah consisted of dissenters who had turned against the Nephites (see Helaman 11:24-26, 3 Nephi 1:27-28). In Gadianton’s day they had fled the land to avoid being apprehended for their treasonous acts in killing the chief judge Pahoran and attempting to slay his successor, Helaman (Helaman 2:11). Because of this flight, they fit the description found in the Temple Scroll of the man who “escapes amongst the nations.” Giddianhi, Zemnarihah’s predecessor as leader of the band, admitted that his people had dissented from the Nephites (3 Nephi 3:9-11). It is also of interest that Giddianhi swore “with an oath” to destroy the Nephites (3 Nephi 3:8), clearly plotting evil against the people as also

mentioned in the Temple Scroll. His successor's execution by hanging is entirely in line with early Jewish law.

4. There is an ancient idea of fashioning a punishment that fits the crime. For example, if a thief broke into a house, he was to be put to death and "hung in front of the place where he broke in." Under both biblical and ancient Near Eastern Law, ancient punishments called "talionic punishments" were often related symbolically to the offense. Thus the punishment for a false accuser was to make him suffer whatever would have happened to the person he had falsely accused (see Deuteronomy 19:19). In Zemnariyah's case this widely recognized principle of ancient jurisprudence was followed when he was hanged in front of the very nation he had tried to destroy and when he was felled to the earth just as he had tried to bring that nation down.

5. Finally, the people all chanted loudly, proclaiming the wickedness of Zemnariyah, which may be reminiscent of the ancient practice of heralding (publicizing or announcing) the execution of a particularly notorious criminal (see Deuteronomy 19:20). An even clearer example of heralding in the Book of Mormon is found in Alma 30:57, where the results in Korihor's case were heralded abroad. In both these cases, the apparent requirement of publishing the wickedness of the culprit was satisfied, so that all who remained would "hear and fear" and the evil would be removed from among God's people. (John W. Welch, "The Execution of Zemnariyah," *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 250-52.)

Terrence L. Szink has noted a similarity between the peculiar ritual described in these two verses to Egyptian "execration texts." He wrote: "In such texts, the Egyptians of the Middle Kingdom ritually cursed their enemies by writing their names on bowls or figures of clay and then smashing them. As they broke the bowls or figures they believed they were destroying the power of those whose names were inscribed thereon" (*Studies in Scripture, Volume Eight, Alma 30 to Moroni*, 132).

**30 And they did rejoice and cry again with one voice, saying: May the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, protect this people in righteousness, so long as they shall call on the name of their God for protection.**

**31 And it came to pass that they did break forth, all as one, in singing, and praising their God for the great thing which he had done for them, in preserving them from falling into the hands of their enemies.**

**32 Yea, they did cry: Hosanna to the Most High God. And they did cry: Blessed be the name of the Lord God Almighty, the Most High God.**

**verse 32** "Hosanna" may be interpreted: Save us now; we *pray* thee (or we *beseech* thee)!

**33 And their hearts were swollen with joy, unto the gushing out of many tears, because of the great goodness of God in delivering them out of the hands of their**

**enemies; and they knew it was because of their repentance and their humility that they had been delivered from an everlasting destruction.**

**verse 33** “**their hearts were swollen with joy, unto the gushing out of many tears**” This phrase is a favorite of Elder Neil A. Maxwell who has taught us that even the most profound earthly joy which we may experience during this mortal existence does not compare to that we will feel at the moment of our reunion with family and friends in the life hereafter (*Notwithstanding My Weakness*, 58; *Not My Will, But Thine*, 143).

These Nephites tearfully “stood all amazed” at the mercy of God. At this point they truly realized the truth of the common and recurring theme emphasized and re-emphasized by the prophet Mormon throughout the Book of Mormon text. Mormon believed literally in the “promise/curse” of the Book of Mormon: The Lord was committed to defend his covenant people and protect them from being placed in bondage to any other people when they were righteous, but not under other circumstances (see the commentary for 2 Nephi 1:20 and the introductory commentary for Alma 43; see also the following verse).

No matter how formidable and how threatening the enemy and by how much they outnumbered the Nephites, the Nephites’ most significant problem was not the enemy’s military might. It was rather their own unrighteousness.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 5

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1 And now behold, there was not a living soul among all the people of the Nephites who did doubt in the least the words of all the holy prophets who had spoken; for they knew that it must needs be that they must be fulfilled.

2 And they knew that it must be expedient that Christ had come, because of the many signs which had been given, according to the words of the prophets; and because of the things which had come to pass already they knew that it must needs be that all things should come to pass according to that which had been spoken.

3 Therefore they did forsake all their sins, and their abominations, and their whoredoms, and did serve God with all diligence day and night.

**verse 3** As I read through these verses again in November 2012, I am struck with the marked differences between the Nephite society being described herein and the present-day culture of the United States of America. Today, our priorities, in general, have excluded God and his commandments and purposes. I sense that America today is far to the right in the “prosperity-pride-destruction cycle,” and it is most disquieting to contemplate the possible consequences that await.

“Abominations” are perverse doctrines and practices, especially those associated with idol worship. These are particularly abominable or detestable in the eyes of the Lord.

“Whoredoms” are sexual sins.

**verses 1-3** The Nephite nation will remain together for three more years after the defeat of the Gadianton robbers. Apparently they were still living off the provisions which they had stored (see 3 Nephi 4:4). These three years constituted a sort of mini-golden era for the Nephites.

4 And now it came to pass that when they had taken all the robbers prisoners, insomuch that none did escape who were not slain, they did cast their prisoners into prison, and did cause the word of God to be preached unto them; and as many as would repent of their sins and enter into a covenant that they would murder no more were set at liberty.

5 But as many as there were who did not enter into a covenant, and who did still continue to have those secret murders in their hearts, yea, as many as were found breathing out threatenings against their brethren were condemned and punished according to the law.

**verse 5** The fact that there were some who would not abandon their previous wicked secret oaths when faced with certain condemnation and punishment provides evidence of the unusual devotion to the Gadianton society of some of its members.

**6 And thus they did put an end to all those wicked, and secret, and abominable combinations, in the which there was so much wickedness, and so many murders committed.**

**7 And thus had the twenty and second year passed away, and the twenty and third year also, and the twenty and fourth, and the twenty and fifth; and thus had twenty and five years passed away.**

**verses 8-26** These verses comprise a most interesting editorial comment by the abridger of the large plates of Nephi, the prophet Mormon. Before reading it, you may wish to refresh your memory of the plates of the Book of Mormon by reviewing the supplemental article, *Those Confusing Book of Mormon Plates*. In these verses Mormon clarifies his identity, his sources, his purpose, and his inspiration for editing the account onto the plates of Mormon. He also testifies as to the accuracy of his record. This type of commentary has been referred to previously in our study of the Book of Mormon as a “colophon.” For a discussion of the significance of colophons in ancient literature, see the commentary for 1 Nephi 1:1-3.

Why is this comment placed here in 3 Nephi 5? Wouldn't it have been more logical to insert this editorial comment following his abridgment of his own writings on the large plates of Nephi? This would have resulted in this multi-verse editorial comment's being placed following Mormon chapters 1-7. Perhaps he placed his own editorial account and testimony here because he was not certain he would live to write his own account of his day.

**8 And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be great and marvelous; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years;**

**verse 8 “this book”** Mormon refers here to his abridgement onto the plates of Mormon. He then makes specific reference to the preceding twenty-five year period beginning at the time of the Savior's birth. Mormon maintains that he was unable to record less than one percent of the events that took place during this period (see also Words of Mormon 1:5; 3 Nephi 26:6; Ether 15:33). The phrase “a hundredth part” is likely hyperbolic and perhaps should not be taken literally. Mormon intends to say that his record contains only a very small part of the events of this period.

**9 But behold there are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people; and a shorter but true account was given by Nephi.**

**verse 9** Here Mormon seems to be commenting on only the twenty-five years following the Savior's birth.

**“records which do contain all the proceedings of this people”** This phrase has reference to the collection of plates called the large plates of Nephi and all entries onto these plates regarding the events of this twenty-five year period of time.

**“a shorter but true account . . . given by Nephi”** Does this phrase refer to the small plates of Nephi? It apparently does not, since the small plates of Nephi do not apply to the twenty-five years since the Savior’s birth. Rather, it refers to the writings of Nephi, the son of Nephi, the son of Helaman, which were recorded on the large plates of Nephi and which contained the account of the happenings of this twenty-five year period. It was from this account that Mormon obtained the materials from which he wrote his abridged account of this quarter century (see the following verse).

**10 Therefore I have made my record of these things according to the record of Nephi, which was engraven on the plates which were called the plates of Nephi.**

**verse 10** The “record of Nephi” refers to writings of Nephi, the son of Nephi on the “plates of Nephi”—the large plates of Nephi. Mormon will abridge this record and his abridgment will be called by us Third Nephi or 3 Nephi.

At this point the prophet Mormon pauses in his narrative and bears testimony of his own record, the plates of Mormon. In doing so, he follows a formal pattern. Terrence L. Szink has found that Nephi, the son of Lehi, followed this same pattern as he bore testimony of his own record, the small plates of Nephi.

Each of these two writer-engravers: (1) declared that he had made the plates with his own hands (1 Nephi 1:3, 3; 3 Nephi 5:11); (2) provided a concise autobiographical comment (1 Nephi 1:1; 3 Nephi 5:12-13); (3) briefly stated the source of his information (1 Nephi 1:3; 3 Nephi 5:16-17); (4) testified of his record using almost identical language (1 Nephi 1:3; 3 Nephi 5:18); and (5) made mention of the language in which their plates were written (1 Nephi 1:2; 3 Nephi 5:18). Brother Szink comments: “So many similarities cannot be attributed to mere chance. I believe that these two prophets employed what was a specific Nephite formula for giving testimony. It is difficult to say whether the formula was a literary device or had formed part of the Nephite legal system” (*Studies in Scripture, Volume Eight, Alma 30 to Moroni*, 134-35).

**11 And behold, I do make the record on plates which I have made with mine own hands.**

**verses 10-11 “I do make the record”** Mormon engraved his record or abridgment onto a separate set of plates “which [he] made with [his] own hand”—the plates of Mormon.

**12 And behold, I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people, yea, the first church which was established among them after their transgression.**

**verse 12 “I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon”** It is interesting and surprising that this is the first time in the writings on the plates of Mormon that Mormon introduces himself. One might have expected him to do so earlier in the book, even at the beginning of the record as did Nephi at the beginning of the small plates of Nephi. Perhaps such an introduction was contained at the beginning of the book of Lehi which was the first part of the plates of Mormon and which was contained on the 116 pages of manuscript lost by Martin Harris. Mormon does identify himself by name in the Words of Mormon, but that book was found at the end of the small plates of Nephi and was translated after the translation of the plates of Mormon was complete.

**“the first church which was established among them after their transgression”** Mormon refers to the restoration of the church among the Nephite peoples by the senior Alma in 145 BC which occurred after the apostasy of king Noah and his people in the land of Nephi (see the commentary for Mosiah 18:17). The land of Mormon was undoubtedly the land that contained the waters of Mormon, where Alma performed the first baptisms of “the restoration.”

**13 Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life.**

**verse 13 “I am a disciple of Jesus Christ”** Mormon has been called as a special witness of the Savior—as an apostle (D&C 107:23). When Christ appears personally to the Nephites following his resurrection, he will call twelve Nephite disciples or apostles. We can presume that a succession of this priesthood office persisted down to the time of Mormon (see 4 Nephi 1:14; see also Moroni 2:1-2).

**14 And it hath become expedient that I, according to the will of God, that the prayers of those who have gone hence, who were the holy ones, should be fulfilled according to their faith, should make a record of these things which have been done—**

**verse 14 “the prayers of those who have gone hence, who were the holy ones”** Who are these “holy ones”? They are those righteous prophets and disciples of the Book of Mormon who prayed that the Book of Mormon plates would be preserved so that they might come forth unto those of the latter days. They include the likes of the prophet Enos who did “cry unto God that he would preserve the records; and he [the Lord] covenanted with me that he would bring them [the record of the Book of Mormon peoples] forth unto the [latter-day] Lamanites in his [the Lord’s] own due time” (Enos 1:16).

**15 Yea, a small record of that which hath taken place from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem, even down until the present time.**



**verse 15 “even down until the present time”** It is interesting to speculate as to which point in time this editorial comment by Mormon was actually written. He is obviously in the process of abridging the materials written by Nephi, the son of Nephi—the book he will call Third Nephi. But what else had he written? For example, had he recorded the record of his own day onto the large plates of Nephi. I’m not certain it is possible to answer that question—read on!

**16 Therefore I do make my record from the accounts which have been given by those who were before me, until the commencement of my day;**

**verses 15-16** Here Mormon refers again to his abridgment of the large plates of Nephi written onto the plates of Mormon. He refers to his abridgement in the prior verse as “a small record” (see also Mormon 5:9). His abridgement was small relative to the volume of plates in the set we call the large plates of Nephi.

**“until the commencement of my day”** Here the prophet Mormon refers to all of the Book of Mormon prophets who recorded onto the large plates of Nephi from Lehi to his own day—to the end of 4 Nephi.

**17 And then I do make a record of the things which I have seen with mine own eyes.**

**verse 17** In this verse Mormon apparently refers to his own writings, the writings of his own day, which he will enter or has entered onto the large plates of Nephi (see Mormon 1:4; 2:18). After he does so, he will then abridge his own record and enter that abridgment onto the plates of Mormon. Those writings—that abridgement—is now found in Mormon 1-7.

**18 And I know the record which I make to be a just and a true record; nevertheless there are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write.**

**verse 18 “I know the record which I make to be a just and a true record”** We might try to differentiate here between the meanings of “just” and “true.” “Just” means that it contains a reliable and correct account of valid eternal principles. “True” means that it is authentic, that it is what it purports to be.

**“there are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write”** The prophet Moroni will later teach: “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. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew . . . . and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record” (Mormon 9:32-34).



**19 And now I make an end of my saying, which is of myself, and proceed to give my account of the things which have been before me.**

**verse 19** “I make an end of my saying, which is of myself” Mormon will begin to conclude his editorial comment.

“and proceed to give my account of the things which have been before me” Perhaps Mormon means to say here that he will conclude his editorial comment and resume his abridgement of those events that occurred in the Book of Mormon prior to his own day.

**20 I am Mormon, and a pure descendant of Lehi. I have reason to bless my God and my Savior Jesus Christ, that he brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, (and no one knew it save it were himself and those whom he brought out of that land) and that he hath given me and my people so much knowledge unto the salvation of our souls.**

**verse 20** “and no one knew it save it were himself and those whom he brought out of that land” Nephi, the son of Lehi, taught that the Lord had maintained a protective hand over the family of Lehi as they departed Jerusalem so “that the Jews might not know concerning our flight into the wilderness, lest they should pursue us and destroy us” (1 Nephi 4:36).

**verses 21-26** Now, in the verses that follow, Mormon concludes his tiny personal editorial and self introduction with a prophecy regarding the future of the house of Israel.

**21 Surely he hath blessed the house of Jacob, and hath been merciful unto the seed of Joseph.**

**22 And insomuch as the children of Lehi have kept his commandments he hath blessed them and prospered them according to his word.**

**23 Yea, and surely shall he again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord their God.**

**verse 23** This verse refers to something that lies in the future as compared to the time of Mormon’s life. Perhaps this refers to the latter-day introduction of the gospel to the descendants or “remnants” of the Book of Mormon peoples. Or, as suggested by the following verse, perhaps he prophesies of the eventual restoration of the gospel to other remnants of the scattered tribe of Joseph and other tribes of Israel.

**24 And as surely as the Lord liveth, will he gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob, who are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth.**

**verse 24** This refers to the latter-day gathering of all the house of Israel in preparation for the Lord's second coming.

**25 And as he hath covenanted with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled in his own due time, unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant that he hath covenanted with them.**

**verse 25** Here we learn that Abraham's posterity is promised a full knowledge of God's covenants with the house of Jacob—they will come to fully understand the nature of their covenant relationship with God. And just how is a knowledge of these covenants going to be communicated to Jacob's descendants in the last days? It will be revealed in the pages of the Book of Mormon! The resurrected Lord will provide these details about his covenant promises with the house of Israel in two important discourses delivered by the resurrected Christ and recorded in the Book of Mormon: "The Law and the Covenant Discourse"—3 Nephi chapters 15 and 16, and "The Covenant People Discourse"—3 Nephi 20:10 to 23:5.

**26 And then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and then shall they be gathered in from the four quarters of the earth unto their own lands, from whence they have been dispersed; yea, as the Lord liveth so shall it be. Amen.**

**verse 26** "then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and then shall they be gathered in from the four quarters of the earth unto their own lands, from whence they have been dispersed" We have discussed previously the gathering of Israel (see the introductory commentary for 1 Nephi 20). There we concluded that there is both a spiritual gathering and a temporal gathering. The spiritual gathering occurs when a people accept Christ and join his church. The temporal gathering consists in moving to that location where the saints have gathered (2 Nephi 9:2). The sequence of gathering generally is first to Christ and his church, and then to specific locations.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 6

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**1 And now it came to pass that the people of the Nephites did all return to their own lands in the twenty and sixth year, every man, with his family, his flocks and his herds, his horses and his cattle, and all things whatsoever did belong unto them.**

**2 And it came to pass that they had not eaten up all their provisions; therefore they did take with them all that they had not devoured, of all their grain of every kind, and their gold, and their silver, and all their precious things, and they did return to their own lands and their possessions, both on the north and on the south, both on the land northward and on the land southward.**

**verse 2** “they did return to their own lands . . . both on the north and on the south, both on the land northward and on the land southward” Again, it seems likely these Nephites’ homes were all located in the greater land of Zarahemla, and that these directional designations were simply describing the relationship of their home lands to the limited area in which they had gathered for self-protection.

**3 And they granted unto those robbers who had entered into a covenant to keep the peace of the land, who were desirous to remain Lamanites, lands, according to their numbers, that they might have, with their labors, wherewith to subsist upon; and thus they did establish peace in all the land.**

**verse 3** “who were desirous to remain Lamanites” These converted Lamanite souls had previously joined with the Gadianton band. They now desired to hold to their covenants and remain Lamanites rather than rejoin the numerous dissenting Nephites who had comprised the large part of the Gadiantons.

The Gadiantons had again been effectively eradicated just as they had been in the days of Nephi the son of Helaman (Helaman 11:10).

**4 And they began again to prosper and to wax great; and the twenty and sixth and seventh years passed away, and there was great order in the land; and they had formed their laws according to equity and justice.**

**verse 4** “equity and justice” Can one really distinguish between these two virtues? Intuitively we may define *justice* as “according to the law as it is written.” What then is equity? Is it something in addition to justice? Elder Bruce R. McConkie has defined *equity* as “the principle which tempers the harshness of justice. Equity dictates that the law shall be administered according to its spirit and not merely its letter (D&C 102:16; 134:3; Helaman 3:20; 3 Nephi 6:4). It is an attribute of Deity (Psalm 98:9; 99:4; Alma 9:26)” (“Equity” in *Mormon Doctrine*, 231).

**5 And now there was nothing in all the land to hinder the people from prospering continually, except they should fall into transgression.**

**verse 5** According to the now well-known promise/curse of the Book of Mormon, if the people are faithful to their covenants then they are literally guaranteed by the Lord that nothing on earth can, without their own will and action, mar their liberty, security, prosperity, and happiness.

The Nephites were enjoying a happy ending to a frightening threat and were certain to experience a splendid economic boom. And how long did this happy period last? For about two years. Then “there became a great inequality in all the land, insomuch that the church began to be broken up” (3 Nephi 6:14).

**6 And now it was Gidgiddoni, and the judge, Lachoneus, and those who had been appointed leaders, who had established this great peace in the land.**

**7 And it came to pass that there were many cities built anew, and there were many old cities repaired.**

**8 And there were many highways cast up, and many roads made, which led from city to city, and from land to land, and from place to place.**

**9 And thus passed away the twenty and eighth year, and the people had continual peace.**

**10 But it came to pass in the twenty and ninth year there began to be some disputings among the people; and some were lifted up unto pride and boastings because of their exceedingly great riches, yea, even unto great persecutions;**

**verse 10** “exceedingly great riches, yea, even unto great persecutions”

We are reminded of Jacob’s warning to the rich: “Wo unto the rich, who are rich as to the things of the world. For because they are rich they despise the poor, and they persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures; wherefore, their treasure is their god. And behold, their treasure shall perish with them also” (2 Nephi 9:30).

**11 For there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers.**

**verse 11** When a society becomes involved in active foreign trade, a bureaucracy grows up to negotiate alliances and administer laws governing the trade practices (see the commentary for Helaman 6:7-8). It is likely these “merchants,” “lawyers,” and “officers” were involved in the trade industry and had become wealthy in the process.

**12 And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches.**

**verse 12** To understand the probable central reasons for the appearance of this class society, see the commentary for Helaman 6:7-8 which discusses the phenomenon of foreign trade among the Nephites.

It is clear that in a class society, poverty can result in a lesser opportunity for education. It is also clear that the Lord regards this as an evil fruit of a class society (D&C 49:20).

**13 Some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceedingly humble; some did return railing for railing, while others would receive railing and persecution and all manner of afflictions, and would not turn and revile again, but were humble and penitent before God.**

**verse 13 “some did return railing for railing”** To *rail* against someone is to speak negatively or bitterly or reproachfully (finding fault) against them.

**14 And thus there became a great inequality in all the land, insomuch that the church began to be broken up; yea, insomuch that in the thirtieth year the church was broken up in all the land save it were among a few of the Lamanites who were converted unto the true faith; and they would not depart from it, for they were firm, and steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord.**

**verse 14 “the church was broken up in all the land”** Obviously there were not only classes that existed in society *without* the church, but the factions rose up *in* the church as well. The opposite of this fragmentation of the church, and indeed the solution to such fragmentation is the phenomenon of unity within the church. The Savior taught that unity among his followers served as a witness to the world that he is the Christ (John 17:20-26). Paul exhorted all to become “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19) and to “come in the unity of the faith” (Ephesians 4:13). Zion refers to the community of believers who, through their unity in Christ, have become “of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18). Such unity among the saints is achieved through individual obedience to the laws of God and through common dedication to the Savior. In order to be unified, the church members must share common aspirations, beliefs, and purposes. In the Book of Mormon, for example, the Savior explained that to become “one,” members must end disputations and contentions (3 Nephi 11:22-28, 36). The Book of Mormon also teaches that the saints must mitigate any condition that undermines unity among members, including significant economic and social distinctions (3 Nephi 6:10-16; 4 Nephi 1:24-35) (F. Neil Brady, “Unity” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, volume 4).

Brother Hugh Nibley observed: “Economic inequality is a deadly danger to the church in every age. . . . The usual explanation . . . for the increasing iniquity of society .

. . . is nothing but the desire 'for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world' (verse 15)" (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 6, 393).

**15 Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this—Satan had great power, unto the stirring up of the people to do all manner of iniquity, and to the puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world.**

**verse 15** Commenting on the remarkable rapidity with which the Book of Mormon people turn from humble and righteous to proud and wicked, Hugh Nibley wrote:

Money gets quick results, and the effects of newly acquired riches are almost instantaneous. At once the happy recipient of a big promotion is expected to change his lifestyle, move to a better part of town, join different clubs, send his children to different schools, even change his church affiliation for a more fashionable one, or drop an intended bride for one more acceptable to the president's wife and her exalted circle. . . . No, my friends, the Book of Mormon does not exaggerate either the relentless efficiency or the speed with which wealth corrupts all those who "set their hearts upon riches and the things of the world" (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 8, 364-65).

**16 And thus Satan did lead away the hearts of the people to do all manner of iniquity; therefore they had enjoyed peace but a few years.**

**verse 16** One might well wonder as to the role of Satan in "lead[ing] away the hearts of the people to do all manner of iniquity." After all, is not there an element of "natural man" or "natural self" within each of us that might incline us toward iniquitous behavior without any prompting at all? Satan is "street wise" and smart. He obviously delights in a man's succumbing to his natural self. That natural self seems to be the root cause of sin. It is quite separate from the influences of Satan. But Satan provides abundant opportunities or temptations for a man to be led away by his natural tendencies. Satan also provides comfort and consolation after the fact of sin. "Please don't feel bad. Don't blame yourself. You were only doing what any normal man would have done under those circumstances."

One might well argue that the pulls of the natural self are more ubiquitous and more readily accessible to man than the Spirit's promptings. The former require no effort or striving. They do not have to be earned. We do not have to qualify ourselves to be worthy of them. They are provided to all mortals "free-of-charge." On the other hand, one must strive earnestly to qualify to receive the promptings of the Spirit of God.

**17 And thus, in the commencement of the thirtieth year—the people having been delivered up for the space of a long time to be carried about by the temptations of the devil whithersoever he desired to carry them, and to do whatsoever iniquity**

he desired they should—and thus in the commencement of this, the thirtieth year, they were in a state of awful wickedness.

**verse 17** “the people having been delivered up for the space of a long time to be carried about by the temptations of the devil whithersoever he desired to carry them” The people had completely lost control over their own destinies. Their unrighteousness had “delivered [them] up” to the will of Satan.

**18** Now they did not sin ignorantly, for they knew the will of God concerning them, for it had been taught unto them; therefore they did wilfully rebel against God.

**verse 18** The Nephites brought condemnation upon their own heads because they knowingly and wilfully rejected the teachings of the brass plates and the counsels of the prophets of the Lord.

**19** And now it was in the days of Lachoneus, the son of Lachoneus, for Lachoneus did fill the seat of his father and did govern the people that year.

**20** And there began to be men inspired from heaven and sent forth, standing among the people in all the land, preaching and testifying boldly of the sins and iniquities of the people, and testifying unto them concerning the redemption which the Lord would make for his people, or in other words, the resurrection of Christ; and they did testify boldly of his death and sufferings.

**verse 20** The Lord patiently and mercifully offers to the Nephites an opportunity to repent. We have previously observed that the Lord never levels serious destruction against people without an adequate warning. We will see in the ensuing verses that the Nephites did not take advantage of this opportunity to repent. Note that the Lord had inspired *men* to preach to the people and call them to repentance. Obviously, Nephi, the son of Nephi, was not the only prophet of the day.

“they did testify boldly of his death and sufferings” These prophets were preaching to people with a Jewish heritage. Whom did the Jewish world await as their messiah? They waited upon one who would be a conquering hero—certainly not a suffering servant who would willingly lay down his life. Thus it was not only appropriate, but important for these prophets to teach and prophesy of a Savior who would suffer and willingly lay down his life.

**21** Now there were many of the people who were exceedingly angry because of those who testified of these things; and those who were angry were chiefly the chief judges, and they who had been high priests and lawyers; yea, all those who were lawyers were angry with those who testified of these things.

**verse 21** Again we learn that the most vociferous and vocal opponents of the prophets and their message were the “king men” whose socioeconomic positions were



threatened (see the introductory comments for Alma 46 and the commentary for Helaman 6:8).

**22 Now there was no lawyer nor judge nor high priest that could have power to condemn any one to death save their condemnation was signed by the governor of the land.**

**23 Now there were many of those who testified of the things pertaining to Christ who testified boldly, who were taken and put to death secretly by the judges, that the knowledge of their death came not unto the governor of the land until after their death.**

**verse 23** “there were many . . . who were taken and put to death secretly”

Apparently one of these was Timothy, the brother of the prophet Nephi. Timothy was raised from the dead by his brother (see 3 Nephi 7:19; 19:4). This same Timothy, along with his brother Nephi will become a disciple (apostles) of the Lord.

**24 Now behold, this was contrary to the laws of the land, that any man should be put to death except they had power from the governor of the land—**

**25 Therefore a complaint came up unto the land of Zarahemla, to the governor of the land, against these judges who had condemned the prophets of the Lord unto death, not according to the law.**

**26 Now it came to pass that they were taken and brought up before the judge, to be judged of the crime which they had done, according to the law which had been given by the people.**

**verse 26** “they were taken and brought up before the judge” These lesser judges were brought before the chief judge of the land, Lachoneus the son of Lachoneus (see verse 6).

**27 Now it came to pass that those judges had many friends and kindreds; and the remainder, yea, even almost all the lawyers and the high priests, did gather themselves together, and unite with the kindreds of those judges who were to be tried according to the law.**

**28 And they did enter into a covenant one with another, yea, even into that covenant which was given by them of old, which covenant was given and administered by the devil, to combine against all righteousness.**

**verse 28** These judges, lawyers, and high priests made the same covenant Cain had made with Satan: “Satan said unto Cain: Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and by the living God, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands. And Satan sware unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done



in secret. And Cain said: Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain. Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness” (Moses 5:29-31).

Brother Hugh Nibley has referred to the “murder to get gain” concept as “converting life into property” (*Approaching Zion*, 166). Brother Nibley comments upon this wicked covenant group, the king-men:

These lawyers and judges had one annoying check on their power—the “federal government.” All orders of capital punishment had to be signed by the governor of the whole land [verse 22]. To evade the galling restrictions of centralized government, these men of affairs accordingly developed skillful techniques of putting people out of the way before the governor could hear about it [verse 23]. When news of this leaked out and they were brought to trial, the friends and families of the judges rallied to the cause of regional rights, while all the bureaucracy of lawyers and high-priests closed ranks, came together—“and did . . . unite with the kindreds of those judges” [verse 27]. This is a clear and vivid picture of class government and how it worked. All these people, who were the rulers and masters of the country, holding high office and keeping the power in their family and their class, then covenanted “to destroy the governor, and to establish a king over the land” [verse 30] (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 6, 393-94).

**29 Therefore they did combine against the people of the Lord, and enter into a covenant to destroy them, and to deliver those who were guilty of murder from the grasp of justice, which was about to be administered according to the law.**

**30 And they did set at defiance the law and the rights of their country; and they did covenant one with another to destroy the governor, and to establish a king over the land, that the land should no more be at liberty but should be subject unto kings.**

**verse 30** This wicked group of judges and their influential friends begin to plan a coup d’etat—a forcible takeover of the government. As brother Nibley pointed out, this episode is a good example of what might be referred to as “class government.” All these people who are plotting against the government are the rulers and masters of the country, holding high office and keeping the power in their family and their own upper socioeconomic class.

This group’s desire to have a king is probably largely economically driven. For insight into why this is so, see the commentary for Helaman 6:8.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 7

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**1 Now behold, I will show unto you that they did not establish a king over the land; but in this same year, yea, the thirtieth year, they did destroy upon the judgment-seat, yea, did murder the chief judge of the land.**

**verse 1** These judges and lawyers, actually a group of king-men, have become a secret combination bound to each other by evil covenant (see 3 Nephi 6:28). By destroying the governor or chief judge they succeeded at least partly with their plan—that is, to rid themselves of the limitations imposed by the democratic form of government. They wanted to silence the “voice of the people” and install a leader who would not be hampered by legislative checks and restraints of any kind. They may have been, however, somewhat chagrined to discover that they had also succeeded in destroying the entire central government of the Nephites causing the people to divide themselves into independent tribal units. Thus, there was no longer a cohesive body of people over whom their hand-picked king might rule.

**2 And the people were divided one against another; and they did separate one from another into tribes, every man according to his family and his kindred and friends; and thus they did destroy the government of the land.**

**verse 2** The Nephites were obviously not an entirely homogeneous group. Among the Book of Mormon peoples, at least seven tribal groups maintained their identity over the thousand years of Nephite History. Please review this concept in the commentary for Jacob 1:13. It is apparent that following the collapse of their government, the Nephite people moved directly into this tribal structure. This suggests that the infrastructure was already in place for these tribes. This “tribal” organization will prevail even following the final collapse of Nephite society in about AD 400. When the Americas were “discovered” by the Europeans in the sixteenth century AD, a tribal organization was found to still exist among the descendants of these people.

**3 And every tribe did appoint a chief or a leader over them; and thus they became tribes and leaders of tribes.**

**4 Now behold, there was no man among them save he had much family and many kindreds and friends; therefore their tribes became exceedingly great.**

**verse 4** The wording of this verse suggests that because the tribal units afforded each man a ready and abundant supply of relatives and friends, the tribes became very large. This is a cause/effect relationship that the writer probably did not intend to imply. We might alternatively word this verse for clarity: Because the tribes were very large, each and every man within the tribes had many relatives and friends.

**5 Now all this was done, and there were no wars as yet among them; and all this iniquity had come upon the people because they did yield themselves unto the power of Satan.**

**verse 5** Initially the tribes existed without overt war among them. It will soon become evident, however, that there did exist considerable tension and rancor among the tribes.

**6 And the regulations of the government were destroyed, because of the secret combination of the friends and kindreds of those who murdered the prophets.**

**7 And they did cause a great contention in the land, insomuch that the more righteous part of the people had nearly all become wicked; yea, there were but few righteous men among them.**

**8 And thus six years had not passed away since the more part of the people had turned from their righteousness, like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow to her wallowing in the mire.**

**verse 8** “**six years had not passed away since the more part of the people had turned from their righteousness**” This phrase may be restated: In less than six years the Nephites had gone from being righteous to wicked. Six years from when? The date referred to here is probably about AD 24, when the Nephites had banded together under the leadership of the chief judge Lachoneus and the chief military captain Gidgiddoni, had repented of their sins, and had routed the Gadianton robbers. In AD 24 the Nephites were, almost to a man, righteous and repentant (see 3 Nephi 5:1-3).

During the time the Hebrew world was living the Law of Moses, any reference made by an Israelite to a pig was likely be in a negative context. See also another negative reference to a pig in 3 Nephi 14:6. In contrast, study the reference to pigs in Ether 9:18. Is this reference positive or negative? It is positive—pigs are a valid source of food for man in Jaredite times. Why the difference? Because the Jaredites lived before the Mosaic Law was established.

If one sincerely repents and is cleansed from sin and then later returns to his evil ways, he is here likened to a dog eating its own vomit, or to a sow that is cleansed but then returns to wallow in its mire or excrement.

**9 Now this secret combination, which had brought so great iniquity upon the people, did gather themselves together, and did place at their head a man whom they did call Jacob;**

**verse 9** Two possible meanings are suggested for the name Jacob—(1) “supplant” or “replace” and (2) “deceive” (O. Odelain and R. Seguireau, *Dictionary of Proper Names and Places in the Bible*, 182). It would seem that the latter meaning is applicable here.

**10 And they did call him their king; therefore he became a king over this wicked band; and he was one of the chiefest who had given his voice against the prophets who testified of Jesus.**

**verse 10** “Chiefest” implies that Jacob was a “top-ranking leader.” He had been the primary advocate for martyring the prophets. He became king of the secret combination. His supporters may have intended that he be regarded as king over the entire land, but the new fragmented social order prevented that.

**11 And it came to pass that they were not so strong in number as the tribes of the people, who were united together save it were their leaders did establish their laws, every one according to his tribe; nevertheless they were enemies; notwithstanding they were not a righteous people, yet they were united in the hatred of those who had entered into a covenant to destroy the government.**

**verse 11** This verse seems to contain three separate ideas:

1. The “tribe” or group of those bound together by evil in the secret combination was smaller than the other family tribes.

2. The family tribes each existed independently from one another with their own separate laws established by the leader of each tribe. Nonetheless there was some semblance of unity among the tribes.

3. Even though the family tribes and the secret combination were all made up of people who were unrighteous from the standpoint of gospel principles, the family tribes regarded the secret combination as their enemy because the wicked covenant group (the Gadiantons) had been responsible for destroying the people’s government.

**12 Therefore, Jacob seeing that their enemies were more numerous than they, he being the king of the band, therefore he commanded his people that they should take their flight into the northernmost part of the land, and there build up unto themselves a kingdom, until they were joined by dissenters, (for he flattered them that there would be many dissenters) and they become sufficiently strong to contend with the tribes of the people; and they did so.**

**verse 12** Jacob and his followers decided to leave the country, build up their strength, and then return to Zarahemla hoping to take control of the country. We will learn that they never were able to achieve their goal—even though Jacob was charismatic and persuasive, and he was able to “flatter” or persuade his people to do his will.

**“northernmost part of the land”** For a suggestion as to the specific city to which Jacob and his people fled, see the commentary for Alma 63:4. This city apparently came to be called Jacobugath (see 3 Nephi 9:9) and may have been north of the narrow neck of land, and even north of the land Desolation.

13 And so speedy was their march that it could not be impeded until they had gone forth out of the reach of the people. And thus ended the thirtieth year; and thus were the affairs of the people of Nephi.

14 And it came to pass in the thirty and first year that they were divided into tribes, every man according to his family, kindred and friends; nevertheless they had come to an agreement that they would not go to war one with another; but they were not united as to their laws, and their manner of government, for they were established according to the minds of those who were their chiefs and their leaders. But they did establish very strict laws that one tribe should not trespass against another, insomuch that in some degree they had peace in the land; nevertheless, their hearts were turned from the Lord their God, and they did stone the prophets and did cast them out from among them.

15 And it came to pass that Nephi—having been visited by angels and also the voice of the Lord, therefore having seen angels, and being eye-witness, and having had power given unto him that he might know concerning the ministry of Christ, and also being eye-witness to their quick return from righteousness unto their wickedness and abominations;

**verse 15** This period in Nephite history was one of terror, anarchy, and bloodshed. But also, on the scene, was one the great prophets of the Book of Mormon, the prophet Nephi, the son of Nephi and the grandson of Helaman (see 3 Nephi 1). Obviously Nephi's degree of righteousness qualified him for high spiritual privilege.

16 Therefore, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds—went forth among them in that same year, and began to testify, boldly, repentance and remission of sins through faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

17 And he did minister many things unto them; and all of them cannot be written, and a part of them would not suffice, therefore they are not written in this book. And Nephi did minister with power and with great authority.

18 And it came to pass that they were angry with him, even because he had greater power than they, for it were not possible that they could disbelieve his words, for so great was his faith on the Lord Jesus Christ that angels did minister unto him daily.

**verse 18** Obviously the personal spiritual power of Nephi was enormous and was the product of his profound faith in the Savior. Others in scripture who have taught with like power have included the mortal Christ (Matthew 7:29), Nephi the son of Lehi (1 Nephi 17:52), the sons of Mosiah (Alma 17:2-3), and Enoch (Moses 7:13).

**19 And in the name of Jesus did he cast out devils and unclean spirits; and even his brother did he raise from the dead, after he had been stoned and suffered death by the people.**

**verse 19 “even his brother did he raise from the dead”** This is Nephi’s brother Timothy (3 Nephi 19:4) who will later become one of Jesus’s twelve disciples or apostles in the New World.

It will always be true that the truth angers the wicked. When truth is preached with great spiritual power to the wicked so that they cannot help but believe, the result is that the wicked seek to shut the mouth of the prophet by destroying him. Since we know that Timothy will later become one of the twelve, we might surmise that Timothy, like his brother Nephi, also had the power to preach so that the people could not disbelieve his words. This resulted in his being stoned to death by his wicked hearers. Timothy’s death would have provided a type of false relief to those who slew him who felt they were thus spared from Timothy’s unsettling and disturbing preachings which made them so keenly aware of their guilt and impending destruction. Their false sense of comfort would have lasted only until Nephi exercised his priesthood to raise Timothy from the dead. This miraculous healing must have sent the wicked into a blind rage because they were then left without satisfaction.

For notes on the Greek derivation of the name Timothy, see the supplemental article, *Names in the Book of Mormon*.

**20 And the people saw it, and did witness of it, and were angry with him because of his power; and he did also do many more miracles, in the sight of the people, in the name of Jesus.**

**21 And it came to pass that the thirty and first year did pass away, and there were but few who were converted unto the Lord; but as many as were converted did truly signify unto the people that they had been visited by the power and Spirit of God, which was in Jesus Christ, in whom they believed.**

**verse 21 “they had been visited by the power of Spirit of God, which was in Jesus Christ”** They had received, by personal revelation, through the Spirit of God, a testimony of Christ. One cannot help but wonder whether in a time of near universal wickedness, those few who resist the evil tide and remain converted to the Lord’s gospel might be especially blessed by the Spirit’s visitations.

**22 And as many as had devils cast out from them, and were healed of their sicknesses and their infirmities, did truly manifest unto the people that they had been wrought upon by the Spirit of God, and had been healed; and they did show forth signs also and did do some miracles among the people.**

**23 Thus passed away the thirty and second year also. And Nephi did cry unto the people in the commencement of the thirty and third year; and he did preach unto them repentance and remission of sins.**

**verse 23** Yet a final time the Lord extends to the people an opportunity to repent.

**24 Now I would have you to remember also, that there were none who were brought unto repentance who were not baptized with water.**

**verse 24** Baptism is obviously a most vital ordinance! As taught in the following verse, baptism witnesses to both God and our fellow man contrition and a belief in and an acceptance of Christ and his gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ himself will clearly teach of the necessity of baptism during his visit to the Nephites in Bountiful (3 Nephi 27:20).

**25 Therefore, there were ordained of Nephi, men unto this ministry, that all such as should come unto them should be baptized with water, and this as a witness and a testimony before God, and unto the people, that they had repented and received a remission of their sins.**

**verses 24-25** Obviously Nephi had some limited success in his preaching.

**26 And there were many in the commencement of this year that were baptized unto repentance; and thus the more part of the year did pass away.**



## 3 Nephi Chapter 8

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### Scripture Mastery

#### 3 Nephi 8 Signs of Christ's crucifixion—great destruction throughout the land

The Lord often endures the wickedness of the world with patience and longsuffering. There are times, however, when his patience reaches its limit, and he does not continue to endure. Chauncey Riddle has referred to these times as “days of wickedness and vengeance” (“Days of Wickedness and Vengeance: Analysis of 3 Nephi 6 and 7” in *The Book of Mormon Helaman Through 3 Nephi 8, According To Thy Word*, 191-205). They occur when the gospel has been preached to the people, and yet the people wilfully reject it and continue in wickedness. The people not only reject the teachings of the prophets, but they may banish or even kill the prophets and persecute and destroy the saints as well. The blood of the prophets and the saints cry out, and the Lord hears. When a society deteriorates spiritually to this extent, a setting is created wherein righteousness cannot exist. How, for example, could a child in Ammonihah or Sodom learn to obey God? If the Lord were to allow such societies to continue, he would condemn generations to the powers of Satan. In an ironic way, destruction of such a society may be seen as evidence of God's love. Since those who fail to repent will be consigned to the spirit prison after this life where they will begin to suffer for their own sins, the act of cutting short their sinning is an act of mercy. Death may be the beginning of spiritual wisdom for the wicked. The Lord therefore initiates some form of physical punishment that destroys the people from off the face of the earth. Brother Riddle has pointed out that the scriptures tell of two major times of “wickedness and vengeance”: the meridian of time—in both the Old and New Worlds (Moses 7:45-47)—and the latter days (Moses 7:59-61).

In our study of the Book of Mormon, we have reached one of these times. The Nephites, with the Lord's help, have just defeated the Gadianton robbers. They should have continued in humility and gratitude for the Lord's great blessings to them. Instead they knowingly rejected the doctrine of Christ and fell into pride and wickedness. In chapter 8, we will read of the Lord's vengeance upon the Book of Mormon people in the New World. In the Old World, the Lord will wait until about AD 70 and then allow the Romans to take vengeance upon the people of Jerusalem.

There is a clear and obvious analogy between the period of 3 Nephi 6-7 and our day. In both periods, the righteous believers are awaiting the Lord's advent. The wicked have been taught the gospel, and yet have rejected it. The period of destruction at the time of Christ's crucifixion is felt to be a type or symbol of the ultimate destruction of the ungodly at the time of the Savior's second coming. In like manner the two-

hundred year period of peace and prosperity following the Savior's appearance on the western hemisphere is a type of the great millennial day.

**1 And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record—for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity—**

**verse 1** Mormon adds another editorial comment. As we have noted previously the “just man” who kept or wrote the record Mormon abridged as he created the book of 3 Nephi was Nephi, the son of Nephi who will become the chief disciple of Jesus.

**“there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity”** Here is an important principle. The performing of miracles in the name of Jesus is evidence that one is “cleansed every whit from his iniquity” and thus worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost and worthy to wield the powers of God. “The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and . . . the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness” (D&C 121:36).

**2 And now it came to pass, if there was no mistake made by this man in the reckoning of our time, the thirty and third year had passed away;**

**verse 2 “the thirty and third year had passed away”** The reference date referred to here is the time of the sign of the birth of Christ's birth (3 Nephi 1:15; 2:8). For a review of the three methods of reckoning time in the Book of Mormon, see the commentary for 3 Nephi 1:1.

**3 And the people began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel, the Lamanite, yea, for the time that there should be darkness for the space of three days over the face of the land.**

**verse 3** Now the people begin to look for another sign, the sign of Christ's death which was prophesied by Samuel. For a review of this sign see Helaman 14:20-28.

**4 And there began to be great doubtings and disputations among the people, notwithstanding so many signs had been given.**

**verse 4 “notwithstanding so many signs had been given”** These signs include the miraculous signs that attended the birth of Christ and the many miracles wrought by the prophet Nephi and others.

**verses 5-23** The account of destruction in these verses documents the fulfillment of the prophecies of Nephi (1 Nephi 12:4; 2 Nephi 26:6), Zenos (1 Nephi 19:11-12), and Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 14:20-28).

These verses describe a three-hour period of catastrophic destruction in the land. The text refers to this destructive phenomenon as a “storm,” and it was undoubtedly some type of dramatically destructive convulsion of nature. But what exactly was it? Just what type of “storm” could wreak such havoc? Russell H. Ball has suggested that it might have been a major volcanic eruption perhaps precipitated by major seismic or earthquake activity (“An Hypothesis Concerning the Three Days of Darkness Among the Nephites,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, volume 2, Spring and Fall 1993, 107-23). Brother Ball has outlined textual evidence to support his hypothesis. He lists, for example, all of the mechanisms of the phenomena mentioned in these verses that resulted in massive land destruction. Each of these is plausibly the result of earthquake and volcanic eruption:

1. “a great and terrible tempest” (a *tempest* is a violent windstorm—verse 6) and “whirlwinds” (verse 12). When a huge ash column is ejected from a volcano, it can rise to thousands of feet. When such a column collapses back on the volcano it generates an ash surge carried by high winds that can travel at speeds up to one hundred miles per hour. Such a surge may collapse houses, break through windows, and bury the people inside buildings in an instant.

2. “terrible thunder that shook the whole earth” (verse 6). “exceedingly sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land” (verse 7) Even though there was thunder and an unusual display of lightning, no rain is mentioned. Apparently fine volcanic ash is also very effective in generating lightning. Photographs of erupting volcanoes such as Mount Vesuvius in 1944 (R.V. Fodor, *Earth Afire! Volcanoes and Their Activity*. New York: William Morrow, 1981, 15) and Sakura-Jima in 1987 (Mark Kemp, “Power Surge,” *Discover* [April 1988] 9:40-42), show hundreds of lightning bolts in the ash clouds above those volcanoes. The friction between fine volcanic ash particles in the atmosphere is very effective in generating severe lightning without any attending rain, leaving the ground and wood very dry. It is notable that after hours of thunderstorm activity of unprecedented fury the Nephites’ wood was still referred to as being “exceedingly dry” (verse 21) (Alvin K. Benson, “Geological Upheaval and Darkness in 3 Nephi 8-10” *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, 63-64).

3. “earth’s being carried up upon the city of Moronihah” (verse 10). The roughening of smooth places (verse 13), the subsidence or sinking of some areas, and the building of a “great mountain” in the place where the city of Moronihah had been (3 Nephi 8:10) are events clearly associated with very severe seismic and volcanic activity.

4. floods (3 Nephi 9:7). Even though no rain is mentioned, this “storm” caused the waters to “come up upon” the cities. Landslides, which may have dammed rivers, or which may have caused large waves to spread across lakes, could have caused water to “come up upon” some cities.

5. “earthquakes” which caused some cities to sink, some to burn (3 Nephi 9:9-10), and the buildings of some to collapse (verses 13-14)

6. “cities sunk in the sea” (3 Nephi 9:4, 6-7). An earthquake may result in subsidence or sinking of coastal regions. Those cities which sunk into the depths of the sea were probably located along the west coast.

The wicked met their demise by being sunk and buried in the earth, drowned in the depths of the sea, burned by fire, fallen upon and crushed to death, carried away in the whirlwind, overpowered by the vapor of smoke and of darkness, and swallowed up by the opening of the earth to receive them.

It seems likely, then, that the primary geological phenomenon in this great “storm” was a gigantic earthquake which triggered erupting volcanoes. Apparently it is common for areas that have frequent, severe earthquakes to have a high incidence of volcanic activity (A. F. Espinosa, “The Guatemalan Earthquake of February 4, 1976, a Preliminary Report.” *United States Geological Survey Professional Paper 1002*. Washington: GPO, 1976, 87-90). The combination of earthquake activity and active volcanoes is especially common along the west coast of Central America (Bruce W. Warren and Thomas S. Ferguson, *The Messiah in Ancient America*, Provo, Utah: Book of Mormon Research Foundation, 1988, 40-45).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written of the Lord’s use 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 fulfill 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 (Helaman 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; Helaman 5:27). Both the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord were attested by earthquakes (Matthew 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 Nephi 8; 9:1-14; 10:9-10).

Earthquakes are given as one of the signs of the times; they foreshadow the second coming (Matthew 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” (Revelation 16:18-20; 6:12-17; 8:5; 11:12-15, 19; Zechariah 14:4-5; D&C 133:22-25) (“Earthquakes” in *Mormon Doctrine*, 211).

**5 And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land.**

**verse 5** It is possible that the moment this “storm” began, the Master, on the other side of the world, had just voluntarily given up his life with the words: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Others have suggested that this storm, which will last three hours, occurred during the Savior’s final three hours on the cross. He actually hung upon the cross for about six hours, from approximately 9 am to 3 pm. Perhaps this final three hours was the time of his greatest suffering. We are taught that during this period the agonies of Gethsemane returned (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 4:224-25).

Just when was the Savior crucified? How does the Nephite calendar correspond to our calendar today? Randall P. Spackman has provided us with a compelling discussion of the date of Christ’s crucifixion (“Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology: The Principal Prophecies, Calendars, and Dates,” a FARMS reprint, 57-74). He concludes that the Savior was crucified, according to our present-day calendar, on March 16, AD 29. The interested reader is invited to review Brother Spackman’s article.

**6 And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder.**

**verse 6 “there was also a great and terrible tempest”** A tempest is a violent wind storm.

**“terrible thunder”** Hugh Nibley reports that sometimes an earthquake can be heard before it is felt. He notes that in the Assam earthquake of 1950, one thing stressed in all reports was that an awful rumble heralded the quake, a deafening roar, louder than anything any of the witnesses had ever heard before. He also notes that in the Assam earthquake “strong winds raised the dust until visibility was reduced to a few feet” (*The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 7, 233). Some survivors of the Mount St. Helen’s volcano referred to the noise and shaking as like being next to ground zero in an atomic bomb blast (Thomas G. Aylesworth and Virginia L. Aylesworth, *The Mount St. Helens Disaster*, New York: Franklin Watts, 1983, 15-17).

The great earthquake that completely destroyed the old capital of Guatemala in 1541 was preceded by “the fury of the wind, the incessant, appalling lightning and dreadful thunder that were indescribable in their violence” (*ibid.*). The “terrible thunder” might also have resulted from the lightning.

**“it did shake the whole earth”** It seems likely that the phrase “whole earth” should be understood as “whole land,” that is, all of the area populated by the Nephites and Lamanites. Thus, the destruction was a localized rather than a global phenomenon (see another example of a similar use of the term “whole earth” in Alma 36:7).

**7 And there were exceedingly sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land.**

**verse 7** Hugh Nibley reported: “One of the still unexplained phenomena of earthquakes is that all types of lights are reported seen. . . . There are flashes, balls of fire, and streamers—every type of lightning (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 7, 233).

While sitting at my computer on April 9, 2009, I have just read a news report titled “Volcano’s Lightning Captured in Photo.” The article reported: “In one of the rarest images ever captured in a photograph, scientists have been able to track lightning occurring inside clouds spewing from a volcanic eruption. Using a system called Lightning Mapping Array, researchers were able to see this tumultuous lightning storm occurring above Alaska’s Mount Redoubt when it blew its top on March 22 and 23 [2009].”

## 8 And the city of Zarahemla did take fire.

**verse 8** Hugh Nibley, again:

Now, most of the destruction in the Book of Mormon was caused by fire, not by the earthquake, like the San Francisco earthquake. This is always so in earthquakes, because people have open fires, lamps, and things, and they start everything burning. It would appear from the Nephite account that the main cause of destruction was fire in the cities which agrees with all major statistics through the centuries; for earthquakes are largely a city problem, mainly because the first heavy shock invariably sets fires all over town (*Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, Semester 3, 320).

## 9 And the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof were drowned.

**verse 9** “**And the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea**” Hugh Nibley wrote:

Such a submergence happened on a spectacular scale in the Chilean earthquake of 1960: “We would have taken these flooded stretches, permanently flooded, for coastal lagoons,” a geologist reports, “if here and there we had not seen roads that ran straight toward them and into them. . . . roads that vanished, or sometimes showed under the stagnant water, branching into what had been the streets of a town.” In the New Madrid, Missouri, earthquake of 1811, two vast tracts of land were covered with fresh water both by the damming of streams and the bursting out of numerous earthquake blows or fountains, flooding the newly submerged areas (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 7, 233-34).

Alvin K. Benson has pointed out: “One of the more active [earthquake] zones of the world is located along the western coasts of Central and South America. The mountainous areas there extend oceanward to a long, linear ocean trench. The trench exceeds 20,000 feet in depth and is bordered along the shore by mountains over 22,000 feet high. This large elevation difference of over 40,000 feet is a likely site for

large-scale fault development, allowing blocks of earth to slip oceanward. Such movement could occur during a large earthquake, which could explain the loss of the city of Moroni into the depths of the sea” (“Geological Upheaval and Darkness in 3 Nephi 8-10” *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, 67).

Author’s note: Contrary to Brother Benson’s conclusion in the preceding paragraph, the likely location of the city of Moroni was near the coast of the east sea (see the hypothetical map of Book of Mormon lands).

**10 And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city there became a great mountain.**

**verse 10** This is the first mention of the city of Moronihah in the Book of Mormon, hence we have no idea as to its relative location.

Just how does a city become a “great mountain”? Hugh Nibley again has written: “In September 1538 during a tremendous storm and tidal wave a volcanic mountain suddenly appeared and covered a town near Puzzuoli on the Bay of Naples; ever since, the mountain has been known as Monte Nueve, or New Mountain” (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 7, 235).

**11 And there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward.**

**12 But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward; for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempest and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings and the lightnings, and the exceedingly great quaking of the whole earth;**

**verses 11-12** Again, it is likely that the land southward and the land northward are both parts of the former land of Zarahemla which is entirely south of the narrow neck of land. The land northward included the land Bountiful and its environs, and the land southward included the city of Zarahemla and those lands surrounding it.

**13 And the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough.**

**14 And many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate.**

**15 And there were some cities which remained; but the damage thereof was exceedingly great, and there were many in them who were slain.**

**16 And there were some who were carried away in the whirlwind; and whither they went no man knoweth, save they know that they were carried away.**

**17 And thus the face of the whole earth became deformed, because of the tempests, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the quaking of the earth.**



**verse 17 “thus the face of the whole earth became deformed”** The astute student of the Book of Mormon may conclude from this verse that the lands of the Book of Mormon were so altered by this great catastrophe that it would not be possible to locate and identify those lands on our present-day map of the Western Hemisphere. Is this true? Are those students who are interested in the geography of the Book of Mormon involved in a hopeless quest? John L. Sorenson wrote:

What if the physical conditions changed so much from ancient to modern times that the former locations no longer can be found? We learn from the Book of Mormon that “the face of the whole earth” was changed through terrible earthquakes and other destruction at the time of the Savior’s crucifixion. Could it be that today there is no way to reconstruct the geography of pre-crucifixion times?

The answer to [this question] . . . is . . . in the book. Mormon and Moroni both lived and wrote after the catastrophic changes. They had no trouble identifying locations they personally knew in their lifetimes with places referred to by Alma or Helaman before the catastrophe. Nothing about the pre-crucifixion geography seems to have puzzled them. The volume itself says that the changes at the Savior’s death were mainly to the surface. Bountiful was still in place, its temple still there, when the resurrected Savior appeared (3 Nephi 11:1). Zarahemla was rebuilt on the burned ruin of the former city (4 Nephi 1:8). The narrow pass was still in its key position during the final battles as it had been more than four centuries before. The River Sidon ran the same course, and Ramah/Cumorah, the landmark hill, presided unchanged over the annihilation of its second people. Thus the record itself gives no justification for supposing that the form or nature of the land changed in any essentials, despite the impressive destruction that signaled the Savior’s death. Nor is there reliable evidence from the earth sciences to lead us to suppose major changes took place. Nothing we know prevents our placing most of the ancient places on today’s map (*An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, 45-46).

**18 And behold, the rocks were rent in twain; they were broken up upon the face of the whole earth, insomuch that they were found in broken fragments, and in seams and in cracks, upon all the face of the land.**

**19 And it came to pass that when the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the storm, and the tempest, and the quakings of the earth did cease—for behold, they did last for about the space of three hours; and it was said by some that the time was greater; nevertheless, all these great and terrible things were done in about the space of three hours—and then behold, there was darkness upon the face of the land.**

**verse 19 “they did last for about the space of three hours”** This three-hour period of terrible destruction ushered in the three days of darkness.

We know that the Nephites experienced three hours of terrible storm followed by three days of darkness. To what extent the rest of the world experienced these phenomena is not known. Luke suggests that perhaps the period of storm in the New World corresponded to a three-hour period of darkness in the Old World and perhaps even throughout the whole earth. “And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst” (Luke 23:44-45). While some manifestations may have been noticeable world-wide, it seems likely that the cataclysmic storm and the resulting three days of darkness was a local phenomenon involving the Nephite and Lamanite lands.

What might have been the mechanism for the darkness? If volcanic eruptions last several hours, as described here, the enormous amount of ash discharged might have blanketed a large region and might have produced intense local darkness. It has been suggested that in this darkness the earth was symbolically manifesting its gloom over the death of its Creator.

**20 And it came to pass that there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof who had not fallen could feel the vapor of darkness;**

**21 And there could be no light, because of the darkness, neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceedingly dry wood, so that there could not be any light at all;**

**verses 20-21** The “vapor of darkness” could have been the result of volcanic activity, possibly a combination of dense clouds of dust and volcanic ash and smoke. A large volcano may result in an enormous amount of ash being discharged into the atmosphere. This ash can rise to great heights (many thousands of feet) and then spread out in the stratosphere to cover a large region with an impenetrable cloud of dust (Kathryn A. Goldner and Carole G. Vogel, *Why Mount St. Helens Blew Its Top*. Minneapolis: Dillion, 1981, 37-43). Combined with volcanic ash, smoke, and gases in the lower atmosphere, these phenomena might well have produced the “vapor of darkness.” During the Mount St. Helens volcano observers reported that visibility dropped to zero as thick volcanic dust hid the sun. Day became night as far away as 500 miles. Spokane, Washington, located 250 miles east of the volcano was in complete darkness at 3 pm (Thomas G. Aylesworth and Virginia L. Aylesworth, *The Mount St. Helens Disaster*, New York: Franklin Watts, 1983, 15-17).

Another author James Baer has also suggested that volcanic eruptions might have accompanied the violent earthquake described in this chapter. He notes that in the areas of the surviving Nephites, the concentration of volcanic gases may have been sufficient to prevent the ignition of fires but not high enough to suffocate the people

(“The Third Nephi Disaster: A Geological View,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* [Spring 1986] 129-32).

**22 And there was not any light seen, neither fire, nor glimmer, neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, for so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land.**

**23 And it came to pass that it did last for the space of three days that there was no light seen; and there was great mourning and howling and weeping among all the people continually; yea, great were the groanings of the people, because of the darkness and the great destruction which had come upon them.**

**verse 23** “These three days of darkness obviously accord with the three days that the body of the crucified Christ lay in the borrowed tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. How appropriate that the lands of the Book of Mormon be draped in darkness to commemorate and mourn the death and suffering of their king! The coming of light each morning ought be a reminder to all, of the manner in which our Redeemer brought to an end that long night of darkness we associate with death, and ought also be a reminder of the promise granted us, through him, of a newness of life” (Millet and McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, volume 4, 38-39).

Verse 22 states that the sun, moon, and stars were not visible during this three-day period. It is likely this phenomenon was more the result of things occurring on the earth than in the heavens. No comparable event is found in the New Testament record, suggesting that the three days of darkness was largely another remarkable and unique sign to the Book of Mormon people.

**24 And in one place they were heard to cry, saying: O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great city Zarahemla.**

**25 And in another place they were heard to cry and mourn, saying: O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and had not killed and stoned the prophets, and cast them out; then would our mothers and our fair daughters, and our children have been spared, and not have been buried up in that great city Moronihah. And thus were the howlings of the people great and terrible.**

## 3 Nephi Chapter 9

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 9-10** The Lord's voice is heard out of the darkness following the period of destruction at the time of the Savior's crucifixion.

**1 And it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land, crying:**

**verse 1 "there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land"** This is the voice of the Savior himself. The expression "among all the inhabitants of the earth" is hyperbole, as the verse refers to "all the inhabitants . . . upon all the face of this land."

The Lord will testify in verses 1 through 22 of this chapter that the destructions that have befallen the Nephites were divinely orchestrated because of the wickedness of the people. He will also teach of his relationship with the Father and of his role as Creator of the heavens and earth. He will declare that he is the Redeemer of the world and that in him the Mosaic law is fulfilled. He will also extend an invitation to "the ends of the earth" to come unto him and be saved on conditions of faith and repentance.

**2 Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent; for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people; and it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen!**

**verse 2 "Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent"** Here the Lord is speaking to the people in the midst of the destructive storm. He gives them yet another chance to repent. On this occasion his voice is a terrifying one and not a gentle and comforting one. It is probably safe to say that the world has never known a more dramatic teaching moment. After he speaks here, there will follow silence from heaven for many hours, then the Lord will speak a second time (3 Nephi 10:4-7).

**"for the devil laugheth"** Bruce R. McConkie has described the various meanings of "laughter" in the scriptures. In this particular instance, he suggests that it signifies scorn and derision, as when the righteous are mocked for their good deeds and intentions (Alma 26:23; 2 Kings 19:21; Nehemiah 2:19; Job 12:4; Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53). This kind of laughter is inspired of and practiced by the devil. When calamities befall the inhabitants of the earth, "the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice" (3 Nephi 9:2). At the second coming of Christ, "they that have laughed" in this scornful and derisive manner shall see their folly. And calamity shall cover the mocker,

and the scorner shall be consumed (D&C 45:49-50) (“Laughter” in *Mormon Doctrine*, 432).

**“because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people”** Those slain were the seed of those with whom he had covenanted. He had brought the Book of Mormon people to this new land. He had entered into a covenant with them to protect them so long as they were obedient. Those people with whom the Lord enters into covenants are his people.

**“it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen”** This expression refers to those inhabitants of the Book of Mormon lands who failed to repent and were thus destroyed during the great “storm” following the Savior’s crucifixion. There is no question that this great geological upheaval was intended not only to destroy the wicked but also to serve as a sign to the “more righteous” (verse 13) among the Nephites that the atonement, death, and resurrection of the Savior had taken place. Elder Bruce R. McConkie pointed out, “It is perfectly clear that these destructions came as a just judgment upon the wicked, and that they are in similitude of the outpourings of wrath that shall come upon the whole world at the second coming” (*The Promised Messiah*. Deseret Book, 1981, 541).

**verses 3-10** There follows in these verses a recitation of the great cities of the land which had just been destroyed. These were destroyed because there were no righteous among them and because they had soiled themselves with the blood of the Lord’s prophets and saints.

**3 Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof.**

**4 And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned.**

**5 And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them.**

**verse 5 “that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them”** When a murderer sheds blood, and the murder has not yet been avenged—the murderer has not yet been punished—the blood of the murder victim “cries from the ground.” Under the law of Moses “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Genesis 9:6). The unpunished murderer “defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it” (Numbers 35:30-34). If a murderer could not be found, city elders were to offer sacrifice and testify that they had neither shed the blood nor seen who did it. Then they were to plead, “Be merciful, O Lord . . . and lay not innocent blood unto

thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them" (Deuteronomy 21:1-9).

Here the voice of Christ avers that the punishment has indeed been rendered to the guilty (see also verses 7-9, 11).

**6 And behold, the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth;**

**verse 6 "Gilgal"** For commentary on the name *Gilgal*, see the supplemental article, *Names in the Book of Mormon*. See also Mormon 6:14.

**7 Yea, and the city of Onihah and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Mocom and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants thereof; and waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come up any more unto me against them.**

**verse 7 "waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof"** Compare this description of the destruction of these three cities—Onihah, Mocom, and Jerusalem—to that of the destruction of the city of Moroni: That "great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea" (3 Nephi 8:9, 9:4). There is textual evidence to suggest that Jerusalem was near the waters of Mormon (Alma 21:1-2), and perhaps that body of water was involved in the destruction of Jerusalem, and perhaps the destruction of Onihah and Mocom as well. The Waters of Mormon must have been a very large body of water to be able to rise and cover a whole city, and possibly three cities. From the text, this body of water was located in a highland setting, in or near the land of Nephi, and it therefore must be a large lake.

**8 And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah, and the city of Jacob, and the city of Gimgimno, all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof; and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up any more unto me against them.**

**9 And behold, that great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of king Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire because of their sins and their wickedness, which was above all the wickedness of the whole earth, because of their secret murders and combinations; for it was they that did destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land; therefore I did cause them to be burned, to destroy them from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up unto me any more against them.**

**verse 9 “Jacobugath”** For a discussion of this city and for a suggestion as to its modern-day identity, see the commentary for Alma 63:4.

Reynolds and Sjordahl have suggested that *gath* means a wine press, and the city of Jacobugath may have received its name from the fact that wine was made there, causing the wickedness for which it was finally destroyed (*Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, volume 2, 321).

**10 And behold, the city of Laman, and the city of Josh, and the city of Gad, and the city of Kishkumen, have I caused to be burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof, because of their wickedness in casting out the prophets, and stoning those whom I did send to declare unto them concerning their wickedness and their abominations.**

**verse 10 “city of Josh”** For a discussion of this peculiar name, see the commentary for Mormon 6:14. See also the supplemental article, *Names in the Book of Mormon*.

**“because of their wickedness in casting out the prophets, and stoning those whom I did send to declare unto them concerning their wickedness and their abominations”** The Lord’s decriing of this particular sin suggests that he is willing to extend mercy to those who follow the admonitions of the prophets and repent of most any sin. However, when they cast out the prophets whom the Lord has sent to declare repentance, then they incur the wrath of God.

**11 And because they did cast them all out, that there were none righteous among them, I did send down fire and destroy them, that their wickedness and abominations might be hid from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints whom I sent among them might not cry unto me from the ground against them.**

**12 And many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations.**

**13 O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?**

**verse 13 “O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they”** Those who were spared included those who did not stone the prophets or shed the blood of the saints (see 3 Nephi 10:12).

**“repent of your sins”** Here is the Lord’s call to repentance issued to the “more righteous” Nephites. Just how are we to regard this phenomenon of repentance? It is clear that the opportunity to repent is a free gift, indeed a gift of love from God to his people. It is a gift given to us by a God whose love for us is beyond our understanding. While the opportunity to repent of one’s sins is free gift, the desire to repent and the



motivation and effort necessary to complete the process are hardly “free.” A sinner never comes to possess the desire to repent lest he work for and acquire a gift of the Spirit which may be called “godly sorrow.” See a discussion of this important concept in the commentary for Mosiah 26:29 (see also 2 Corinthians 7:9-11).

“that I may heal you” Bruce R. McConkie has expanded our understanding of the phenomenon of healing:

Even more important than the healing of mentally and physically afflicted persons is the spiritual healing of those who have been dead to the things of righteousness. Those so healed are restored to a state of purity, integrity, and righteousness. Their healing comes about through conversion to the truth and adherence to the principles of righteousness. Thus there is the scriptural promise that Christ “shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings; and all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 25:13; 26:9; Malachi 4:2). That is, spiritual sickness and spiritual death vanish for those who turn to him through whose atoning sacrifice all men have power to become whole spiritually or in other words to be healed from every spiritual malady that would keep them out of the celestial world. Thus the Lord’s call to all men is, “Return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you” (3 Nephi 9:13; Hosea 14:4) (*Mormon Doctrine*, “Healings,” 345).

In this verse the Lord is addressing those who were spared destruction because they were sufficiently righteous, yet they were obviously in need of repentance. We may tend to dissociate ourselves from this group of ancient Nephites and Lamanites. Elder Spencer W. Kimball in his address in general conference in October 1961 has reminded us that many of us may fit nicely into this same category:

It seems that rather than fast and pray, we prefer to gorge ourselves at the banquet tables and drink cocktails. Instead of disciplining ourselves, we yield to urges and carnal desires. Numerous billions we spend on liquor and tobacco. A Sabbath show or a game or a race replaces solemn worship. Numerous mothers prefer the added luxuries of two incomes to the satisfactions of seeing children grow up in the fear of God. Men golf and boat and hunt and fish rather than to solemnize the Sabbath. Old man rationalization is with us. Because we are not vicious enough to be confined in penitentiaries, we rationalize that we are pretty good people; that we are not doing so badly. The masses of the people are much like those who escaped destruction in the ancient days of this continent. The Lord said to them: “O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they [the slain ones], will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?” (3 Nephi 9:13).

**14 Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.**

**verse 14** **“Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you”** This verse along with the preceding verse bring to mind the well-known painting by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel of the creation of Adam.

**verses 15-18** What glorious and profound simplicity is contained in these verses, yet the world does not understand these truths.

**15 Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name.**

**verse 15** **“I am Jesus Christ the Son of God”** It is important to note here that the Savior refers to himself as “Jesus Christ the Son of God.” Monte S. Nyman has pointed out that in 3 Nephi there are eleven such designations or titles Christ gives himself (“The Designations Jesus Gives Himself in 3 Nephi,” *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, 41-58). While the entire Book of Mormon contains many more than these eleven, these few are of particular importance because they are authentic declarations from the Savior’s own tongue. Consequently they reflect the ultimate authoritative appraisal of his various roles in ministering unto us mortals. In addition to “Jesus Christ the Son of God,” these titles include also “the Creator” (3 Nephi 9:15), “I was with the Father from the beginning” (3 Nephi 9:15), “I am in the Father and the Father in me” (3 Nephi 9:15), “in me hath the Father glorified his name” (3 Nephi 9:15), “Redeemer” (3 Nephi 16:4), “I am the light and life of the world” (3 Nephi 9:18; 11:11), “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” (3 Nephi 9:18), “I am the God of Israel” (3 Nephi 11:14), “I am the God of the whole earth” (3 Nephi 11:14), and “I am [he] whom the prophets testified shall come into the world” (3 Nephi 11:10). Yet a twelfth title is implied: “I am the good shepherd” (3 Nephi 15:17).

Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua* or *Jeshua* and means God is *help* or *Savior*. The title *Christ* is of Greek origin and means the anointed one. The Hebrew equivalent of this title is *Messiah*. The Savior thus declares that he is the Messiah. The title Son of God implies that his mortal body was partly of divine origin, that he obtained his divine characteristics directly from his Father in Heaven. These include the ability to atone for our sins, to break the power of death, and become the Savior of all mankind.

**“I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are”** While Jesus does not refer to himself in this verse directly as the Creator, that designation is certainly implied. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “Under the direction of his Father, Jesus Christ created this earth. No doubt others helped him, but it was Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who, under the direction of his Father, came down and organized matter and made this planet, so that it might be inhabited by the children of God” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:74). In what sense did Jesus create “the heavens . . . and all

things that in them are”? While we are not given to know exactly the extent of his creations, we know that his creations were extensive—“worlds without number” (Moses 1:31-35).

**“I was with the Father from the beginning”** The “beginning” is the premortal life (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1). There the Father selected the most brilliant and capable of all the intelligences who was then “begotten” into a spirit body after the image of the Father. This individual was, of course, Jesus Christ who was thereafter known as the *Firstborn*. Jesus was then tutored and tested, and he developed from “grace to grace” and eventually received a “fulness of truth” (D&C 93:11-14). The fulness of truth is defined in scripture as “a knowledge of things past, present, and future” (D&C 93:24). There, the Son became a God and was placed in charge of the creation or organization of all the rest of the Father’s kingdom (Moses 1:32-33). He even somehow assisted with the creation of the spirit bodies of all men (D&C 93:10). This clarifies the Genesis account of “let *us* make man in *our* image” (1:26, italics mine). The plural pronouns *us* and *our* in Genesis must refer to Christ being with his Father from the beginning and being involved in the plan to people the earth. Other roles Jesus fulfilled in the beginning with the Father were: (1) He carried out the foreordinations of men to bear the eternal priesthood of God, which priesthood was named after him, “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God” (D&C 107:3). The premortal spirits were also the beneficiaries of many other foreordinations. (2) He directed the preaching of the gospel to others in the premortal state: “In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. The same was in the beginning with God” (JST John 1:1-3).

**“I am in the Father and the Father in me”** This seems to be an expression of the perfect unity that exists between the Father and the Son. It also carries the idea of the divine investiture of authority that the Father has bestowed upon the Son. The scriptures seem to support the idea that Jesus is “in the Father” in the sense that he submits his will completely to that of the Father. The “Father is in me [Jesus Christ]” in that the Son is imbued with the divine nature and the authority of the Father.

**“in me hath the Father glorified his name”** The Lord Jehovah was certainly speaking for himself as well as his Father when he said to Moses: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Thus the Savior has glorified the name of the Father and his own name by atoning for the sins of mankind (see 3 Nephi 11:11) and enabling men to glorify themselves (see 3 Nephi 19:29). See also Isaiah 53:12; Luke 22:29; and D&C 132:31.

**16 I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled.**

**verse 16 “I came unto my own”** To whom does the Savior refer here? Who are “my [or his] own”? Jesus was born a Jew. And thus he had come unto the Jews. They are “my own.”

**“And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled”** The Book of Mormon passages that foretell his coming are numerous. Those in the Old Testament are few and far between, but we know that at the time of Christ’s ministry in the Old World, the scriptures available to those people (the Old Testament) testified clearly of Christ (see Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39).

**17 And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled.**

**verse 17 “the sons of God”** All mortal men and women are, of course, sons and daughters of God the Father in that he sired their spirit bodies. It is not this relationship, however, that is being referred to here. These “sons of God” are those spirit children of God who are heirs of the celestial kingdom.

**“by me redemption cometh”** In this simple phrase, the Lord states a most profound truth. There is no other name in the universe by which man may receive a kingdom of glory save it be that of Jesus Christ himself.

**18 I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.**

**verse 18 “I am the light and the life of the world”** What does this expression really mean?

The Savior is the “light” in that he is the beacon or signal toward which man must navigate as he works out his eternal destiny. On another occasion he said to the Nephites: “Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you” (3 Nephi 18:16). He then admonished them: “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do” (verse 24). Thus, Jesus was the light of men through his teachings and his example—through his gospel.

There is more, however, to Jesus’s being the light because of his example. For a more complete insight into why Jesus is the “light and life of the world” see *The Concept of Light* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

Jesus will later say to the Nephites: “Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life: (3 Nephi 15:9). He is the “life” in the sense that he is the giver, indeed the source of eternal life.

**“I am Alpha and Omega”** This phrase, of course, consists of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and means “the beginning and the end.” Christ began the work of bringing “to pass the immortality and eternal life” of humankind here on earth.

He was ordained by the Father to be the Creator, the organizer of the intelligences and the elements which comprise our earth and other worlds. He will conclude this mortal phase at his second coming when all the keys of all dispensations will be returned to him and he will begin his millennial reign. He is the hope of our victory in the beginning of the plan and the evidence of our triumph at the end of it.

In a little broader sense, this title reflects the eternal and all encompassing nature of the Lord's existence, work, and glory. All life, all light, all progress, and all salvation come in and through him.

Some Book of Mormon critics have wondered what Greek letters were doing in a Hebrew Book of Mormon. "Alpha and Omega" is a perfectly good English expression and undoubtedly expressed well the meaning of the phrasing found on the plates, which contained no Greek. Joseph Smith might also have appropriately used "A and Z" without implying even for a moment that English letters occurred on the plates of Mormon.

**19 And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings.**

**verse 19** Here the Savior declares that the law of Moses is fulfilled. The symbolic animal sacrifices that served as a type or symbol of the Savior and his atoning sacrifice are now done away. There is now a new meaning to the concept or eternal covenant of sacrifice. Rather than outward sacrifice, we are commanded to have the proper inner attitude as stated in the following verse—one of a "broken heart and contrite spirit."

We do understand, however, that animal sacrifices will be re-instituted for a season as part of the "restitution of all things" (see D&C 13:1; 84:31; 124:39).

**20 And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.**

**verse 20** "ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit" Here we have the new law of sacrifice. Instead of animal sacrifices, we are to sacrifice, actually come to possess, "a broken heart and a contrite spirit." But what is this broken heart and contrite spirit? This is also a gift of the Spirit that must be earned, over time, through obedience to the gospel law. As we obey, and as we contemplate the Savior's atoning sacrifice, our hearts will break as we come to understand his selfless sacrifice. It naturally follows, then, that we will surrender our will to his will—our spirits will become contrite. We will become truly willing to sacrifice

things of the world and become responsive to the Spirit's promptings to continually repent of the myriad ways in which we fall short of the Savior's character and example. In place of outward and visible sacrifices, this new law involves inward changes of attitudes and feelings of our heart.

**“him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost”** For an explanation of the concept of the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, see the commentary for 3 Nephi 19:13-14. *Also see Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth*, in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18.

**“the Lamanites . . . were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not”** The process of becoming sanctified through the operation of the ordinance of “the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost” is an incremental, gradual, and step by step one. A righteous man is not proud or even cognizant of his own spiritual progress as he is blessed by this sacred ordinance. His incremental sanctification occurs so insidiously and incrementally that it is to him virtually imperceptible. His attentions are turned outward rather than inward.

## **21 Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.**

**verse 21** The Savior's earthly experience can be conveniently divided into three categories, namely his message, his ministry, and his mission. Only the events associated with his mission, however, imposed the absolute requirement that he appear in person on earth. Thus, his mission, the atoning sacrifice, became the compelling reason for his condescension.

Certainly it was a great blessing to have the Savior personally preach his gospel message, but that was not the essential reason for which he came. Others have been his spokesmen, both before and after his mortal advent. His ministry included the working of miracles, but Enoch, Moses, Elijah, and others had performed similar wonders before his birth. Peter, Paul, and others would perform like miracles after his ascension.

While others could preach the Savior's message and even perform a ministry of miracles and priesthood ordinances, only he could accomplish that divinely appointed mission, namely the redemption of the world. This is the prime reason he came to the earth (see also 3 Nephi 27:13-16; D&C 49:5; 76:40-42). Perhaps it ought to be added that President Joseph F. Smith spoke of another reason Christ came to earth: “Christ came not only to atone for the sins of the world, but to set an example before all men and to establish the standard of God's perfection, of God's law, and of obedience to the Father” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 270). This is consistent with the observation of Peter: “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

**22 Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved.**

**verse 22 “whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child”** During his Nephite ministry, the Savior makes frequent use of the metaphor of children. As one contemplates the nature of children and their relationship with spiritual things, one is left with the impression that it is vital that each of us contemplates that relationship and strives to become more childlike (see 3 Nephi 10:3-6; 11:37- 38; 17:21-24).



## 3 Nephi Chapter 10

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1 And now behold, it came to pass that all the people of the land did hear these sayings, and did witness of it. And after these sayings there was silence in the land for the space of many hours;

2 For so great was the astonishment of the people that they did cease lamenting and howling for the loss of their kindred which had been slain; therefore there was silence in all the land for the space of many hours.

**verses 3-7** After “many hours” of silence, the Lord begins to speak again.

3 And it came to pass that there came a voice again unto the people, and all the people did hear, and did witness of it, saying:

4 O ye people of these great cities which have fallen, who are descendants of Jacob, yea, who are of the house of Israel, how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and have nourished you.

5 And again, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen; yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem, as ye that have fallen; yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not.

6 O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart.

**verses 4-6** The repeated use of the image in these verses of the hen’s calling after her chickens to come to the shelter and safety of her wings portrays the love of the Savior for his children and his desire to keep them safe and shelter them from the storms of life. He expressed similar sentiments for the Jews in the Old World (Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35) and even in our own dispensation he has expressed the same thoughts (D&C 43:23-25). It is pertinent to note that the hen can raise her wings to offer protection, but her chicks must choose to come to her. Another image which helps us understand the Savior’s intense desire to gather his people around him is that of the human mother who is happiest when her children are gathered safely around her where she can see them and touch them and nurture them and reassure herself that they are safe.

Note in these verses the three tenses of the verb to gather: “how oft have I gathered you,” “how oft would I have gathered you,” and “how oft will I gather you.” One may regard these usages as representing the timelessness of the Savior’s love for

us. His call to repent is extended past, present, and future. His arms are always extended in love and mercy.

**7 But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers.**

**verse 7** The Lord had made a covenant with the Book of Mormon people to protect them so long as they were obedient. Now this remnant of the seed of Israel (largely of the tribe of Joseph) were in danger of breaking their covenants and thus being destroyed from off the land. If they do not repent, then they are no longer his children according to the covenant. Then they would have no claim to an inheritance either temporally or spiritually.

**8 And now it came to pass that after the people had heard these words, behold, they began to weep and howl again because of the loss of their kindred and friends.**

**9 And it came to pass that thus did the three days pass away. And it was in the morning, and the darkness dispersed from off the face of the land, and the earth did cease to tremble, and the rocks did cease to rend, and the dreadful groanings did cease, and all the tumultuous noises did pass away.**

**verse 9** “the darkness dispersed from off the face of the land” The verb “dispersed” implies a breaking up or scattering and may refer to the dispersion of a cloud of volcanic ash and gases.

“the rocks did cease to rend, and the dreadful groanings did cease” This implies that the seismic activity continued throughout the three-day period of the Savior’s entombment, perhaps as a series of aftershocks.

**10 And the earth did cleave together again, that it stood; and the mourning, and the weeping, and the wailing of the people who were spared alive did cease; and their mourning was turned into joy, and their lamentations into the praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer.**

**verse 10** “the earth did cleave together again, that it stood” To *cleave*, of course, means to cling or adhere closely. This colorful language means that the earth stopped shaking, groaning, crumbling, and collapsing.

**11 And thus far were the scriptures fulfilled which had been spoken by the prophets.**

**verse 11** This great cataclysmic destruction had been foretold by Nephi (1 Nephi 12:4; 2 Nephi 26:6), Zenos (1 Nephi 19:11-12), and Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 14:20-28).

12 And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared—

13 And they were spared and were not sunk and buried up in the earth; and they were not drowned in the depths of the sea; and they were not burned by fire, neither were they fallen upon and crushed to death; and they were not carried away in the whirlwind; neither were they overpowered by the vapor of smoke and of darkness.

**verse 13** Though this verse is referring to the survivors of the great “storm,” it implies that some of those killed were “overpowered by the vapor of smoke and of darkness.” Dr. Hugh Nibley has written:

Most of the victims of the great catastrophes of Pompeii, St. Pierre (Martinique, 1902), and Mount Pelee (1906) died of suffocation when earthquake dust, volcanic ash, steam, and hot gases (mostly sulfurated hydrogen gas) took the place of air. In some areas, the Book of Mormon reports, people were “overpowered by the vapor of smoke and darkness”—and so lost their lives. There it is, this vapor of smoke and darkness that comes down. It shuts everything out. Even without volcanic accompaniments, however, major earthquakes kick up a terrible dust, according to Sieberg. They're accompanied by phenomenal vapors and astonishingly thick air (*Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, Semester 3, 321).

When ash from a volcanic eruption “begins to fall back toward the earth, it is accompanied by many gases, including hydrochloric acid, hydrofluoric acid, carbonic acid, carbon dioxide, and ammonia. If the ash fall is heavy, people will naturally suffocate, not only from the ash content itself but from these gases, which are lethal in large quantities” (Bruce W. Warren and Thomas S. Ferguson, *The Messiah in Ancient America*, Provo, Utah: Book of Mormon Research Foundation, 1988, 42). In a few instances in modern times people, animals, and vegetation have been killed by volcanic gases which collected in low spots (Carla W. Montgomery, *Environmental Geology*, 3rd edition, Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown, 1992, 105-106; G. A. Macdonald, *Volcanoes*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972, 25-52, 257).

14 And now, whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them, and see and behold if all these deaths and destructions by fire, and by smoke, and by tempests, and by whirlwinds, and by the opening of the earth to receive them, and all these things are not unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets.

**verse 14** The reader is counseled to search the scripture to reassure himself that these events have indeed been foretold there (see the commentary for verse 11).

**15 Behold, I say unto you, Yea, many have testified of these things at the coming of Christ, and were slain because they testified of these things.**

**16 Yea, the prophet Zenos did testify of these things, and also Zenock spake concerning these things, because they testified particularly concerning us, who are the remnant of their seed.**

**verses 15-16** “These things” refers to the signs associated with the death of the Savior. Verse 16 suggests that perhaps Zenos and Zenock, ancient prophets who wrote upon the plates of brass, were both of the tribe of Joseph, and that the Nephites descended from them. For further information regarding these prophets see the commentary for 1 Nephi 19:10, 1 Nephi 5:16, and the introductory commentary for Jacob 5.

**17 Behold, our father Jacob also testified concerning a remnant of the seed of Joseph. And behold, are not we a remnant of the seed of Joseph? And these things which testify of us, are they not written upon the plates of brass which our father Lehi brought out of Jerusalem?**

**verses 17** Do we have in our Bible a prophecy by father Jacob concerning a remnant of the seed of Joseph? We do not! See the interesting commentary for Alma 46:24.

**18 And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, 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, and great blessings poured out upon their heads, insomuch that soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them—**

**verse 18** The reader should pause for a moment and ponder the blessed privilege that these Nephites and Lamanites will have in actually seeing the resurrected Savior and receiving in person his teachings. Your author has been guilty of envying them.

Bear in mind that these Nephites and Lamanites were the righteous among the people and had been prepared for this experience. The wicked were slain in the great destruction (3 Nephi 9:12-13; 10:12-13). Some of these righteous survivors had seen the signs of the Savior’s birth some thirty-three years previously, and all of them had recently seen the signs of his death. They had survived the three hours of terrible storm along with its terrible tempests, the shaking of the earth, the lightning, the crumbling of buildings, the shearing of huge rocks, and the landslides and collapse of mountains. They had also endured three days of a thick vapor of darkness and had heard the fearful moanings, groanings, and shriekings hundreds of thousands of human beings, many of whom were being crushed and maimed in the tumult. They had heard the voice of the Lord speaking to them in the darkness, declaring that all this had happened

because of the people's wickedness. They were ready to see, hear, and worship their Lord.

It is instructive to contrast the Savior's brief but glorious ministry in the New World with his mortal ministry among the Jews in the Old World. There in the Holy Land walked the very Son of God, the Creator of the earth, the God of Israel. But most of the Jews were not prepared, and they did not appreciate the glorious privilege of having him live among them (John 4, 8; Luke 11:30-32; Matthew 13:16-17). Those in the New World, in contrast, were prepared and consequently received teachings, blessings, and spiritual experiences that far exceeded those given the Jews (see 3 Nephi 19:31-36).

This verse states that Christ appeared to the Nephites "in the ending of the thirty and fourth year." Since his crucifixion took place "in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month" (3 Nephi 8:5), did the Savior wait almost a year to appear to the Nephites in Bountiful? Joseph Fielding Smith has suggested that Christ appeared shortly after his crucifixion and not a few months later (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:26). He cites as evidence the phrase contained in this same verse: "Soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them." Also, he points out that just before the Lord's appearance at the temple in Bountiful, the people were "marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place" during the great storm that had just occurred (3 Nephi 11:1). The text does obviously contain some ambiguity on this point. Yet, as we compare the dates in this verse and in 3 Nephi 8:5, we seem to be taught that his appearance to the people was, indeed, almost a year after his crucifixion. More discussion of this point follows—see the commentary for 3 Nephi 11:1.

**19 Showing his body unto them, and ministering unto them; and an account of his ministry shall be given hereafter. Therefore for this time I make an end of my sayings.**

**verse 19** We know that the principle authors of the book of 3 Nephi were Nephi, the son of Nephi, and the prophet Mormon. Which of the two is writing here? Your author does not know for sure. Perhaps the prophet simply Mormon suspends his editorial comments at this point and begins to abridge the unedited writings of Nephi.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 11

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Jesus Christ did show himself unto the people of Nephi, as the multitude were gathered together in the land Bountiful, and did minister unto them; and on this wise did he show himself unto them. Comprising chapters 11 to 26 inclusive.

### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 11-28** Christ's ministry among the Nephites at Bountiful

**3 Nephi 11:11** I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

**3 Nephi 11:14-15** The multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet.

**3 Nephi 11:29** He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me.

**3 Nephi 11:32-34** And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me.

**3 Nephi 11:38** Ye must become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

The resurrected Savior will deliver to the gathered Nephites three major sermons:

1. The first is similar to the Sermon on the Mount (3 Nephi 12-14).
2. The Savior's second sermon is found in 3 Nephi 15-16, and might be referred to as "The Law and the Covenants discourse." In this sermon, Jesus will declare that he is the one who gave the law to Moses and that he also is the one who covenanted with his people of the house of Israel. He will declare the law of Moses fulfilled.
3. Continuing the next day, the Savior will deliver his third sermon, which may be called "The Covenant People Discourse." Christ will devote much of this sermon to enumerating to Israel those blessings that will be restored to them in the last days. He will promise that as Israel proves faithful, the remnants of Israel will be gathered from the world to their various lands of inheritance. In fact, additional lands of inheritance will be promised the house of Israel in the Americas.

Robert J. Matthews has outlined nineteen subjects Jesus addressed as he taught the gathered multitude. These include:

1. He died and was resurrected.
2. He is the God of Israel and of the whole earth.
3. He will deliver a sermon at Bountiful similar to the Sermon on the Mount.
4. He emphatically declared that he was sent by the Father who told him what to teach and what not to teach.
5. He taught baptism by water and reception of the Holy Ghost.

6. He had fulfilled the law of Moses.
7. He said all the prophecies that have not been fulfilled will be fulfilled.
8. He reaffirmed the covenant made with Abraham and talked of the gathering of Israel in the last days, including the Jews, ten tribes, and the Nephites/Lamanites.
9. He said that the Jews will gather to Jerusalem.
10. The Western Hemisphere is for the descendants of Joseph.
11. A New Jerusalem will be built on the Western Hemisphere.
12. He instituted the sacrament and taught that we must endure to the end.
13. He quoted two chapters of Malachi.
14. He quoted numerous passages from Isaiah and commanded the people to search Isaiah's words.
15. He explained what the name of the Church should be.
16. He commanded that an omission in the record be filled in.
17. He declared that he is the prophet spoken of by Moses.
18. He gave a detailed "in one," (that is, he put it all together—the big picture) declaring that he is the law, the light, and the life of the world.
19. In addition, he performed many miracles, including raising a man from the dead ("Jesus the Savior in 3 Nephi," *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, 31-32).

**1 And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.**

**verse 1 "there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple"** One cannot help but wonder why this group of Nephites, "with men, women, and children" (3 Nephi 17:25), had gathered near the temple on this day. The gathering is reminiscent of the gathering at the time of King Benjamin, every man with his family, in a traditional Feast of Tabernacles fashion (see the introductory commentary for Mosiah 2). One might suppose these Nephites had gathered for a specific purpose at the beginning of that day. Perhaps they had come to the temple on a scheduled religious festival or holy day. These Nephites would have been strict to observe their traditional religious laws, for they were among "the more righteous part of the people" (3 Nephi 10:12), the wicked part having been destroyed.

Traditionally, all Israelites (and hence obedient Nephites) were instructed to gather at the temple three appointed times each year. These included the feasts of Passover (in the Spring), Pentecost (fifty days after Passover), and Tabernacles (in the Fall): "Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God" (Exodus 23:17). Also, "at the end of every seven years, . . . in the feast of tabernacles, . . . all Israel [must] come to appear before the Lord thy God" at the temple, "men, and women,



and children” (Deuteronomy 31:10- 12). As has been pointed out previously in this commentary, there is considerable circumstantial evidence that the Nephites, who were strict in their observance of the law of Moses “in all things” (2 Nephi 5:10; Jarom 1:5; Alma 30:3; 3 Nephi 1:24) observed these essential Israelite festivals.

If the Nephites were assembled on one of these traditional holy days sometime after the signs of Jesus’s death had been given, they probably would have been wondering what they should do next. We know that they observed the law of Moses until Jesus proclaimed its fulfillment, but Jesus’s voice had proclaimed the end of the Mosaic law at the time of his death (see 3 Nephi 9:17). No new instructions had yet been given to the Nephites about the law that was supposed to take its place. It seems inevitable that, sooner or later, as they gathered at their temple on the traditional holy days, they would have wondered if it was still appropriate for them to continue using their old ritual order. It seems unlikely that they would have gone twelve months without addressing the implications of Christ’s death for the continuation of their public rites and temple practices.

We actually do not know how the Nephite ritual calendar related to the Israelite calendar in Jerusalem, for there had been no contact between the two for over six hundred years. It is impossible to determine which of the traditional festivals would have been observed in Bountiful in the months following Jesus’s crucifixion. However, if one can assume that the two ritual calendars had not grown too far apart, the feast of Pentecost would have been celebrated in Bountiful a couple of months after the Passover crucifixion and shortly after Jesus’s ascension. Thus, the Nephite feast of Pentecost would make good sense in that Christ appeared in Bountiful “soon after” his ascension (3 Nephi 10:18). This date is close enough after the events of the destruction that the people could still “marvel” and “wonder” about the whole situation as they conversed about Christ and the signs of his death.

It would seem that the conflict between the phrases “soon after the ascension” and the phrase “in the ending of the thirty and fourth year” (both phrases found in 3 Nephi 10:18) remains unresolved.

**2 And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.**

**3 And it came to pass that while they were thus conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.**

**verse 3 “it did pierce them that did hear to the center”** Even though they did not understand the words, the Spirit prompted them to know that they were receiving, or they were about to receive, a divine communication.

**4 And it came to pass that again they heard the voice, and they understood it not.**

**5 And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came.**

**verse 5 “they . . . did open their ears . . . and their eyes”** Scriptural texts that have reference to opening the eyes and ears of the people often are found in a setting wherein that people are being offered the opportunity to learn particularly sacred things (see Mosiah 2:9). Not all people are intended to hear and know the mysteries of God, only those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. For this reason, Jesus spoke parables to the masses in Palestine—that his sacred meanings might be hidden from those unprepared to receive them. Jesus said to his disciples that it was given for *them* “to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven . . . . Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear” (Matthew 13:11, 16).

**6 And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them:**

**7 Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.**

**verse 7 “in whom I have glorified my name”** These words of the Father are a unique addition to the way in which he had previously introduced the Son (see Matthew 3:17; 17:5) and likely referred at least in part to the Savior’s recent atoning sacrifice.

The three ideas the Father conveys in this introduction are: (1) I love my Son (my “Beloved Son”); (2) My Son pleases me (“in whom I am well pleased”); and (3) My Son has glorified me (“in whom I have glorified my name”). Compare the Father’s introduction of the Son with the Son’s introduction of himself in verses 10-11.

**8 And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, 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; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.**

**verse 8 “they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe”** The Savior’s robes will later be described as being exceedingly white: “there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof” (3 Nephi 19:25).

It is obvious that initially the people were not sure just who it was appearing to them.

**9 And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:**

**10 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.**

**verse 10** This small verse has profound implications (please review the commentary for Jacob 4:4).

**11 And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.**

**verse 11** Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said of this verse: “Fifty six words. The essence of his earthly mission. Obedience and loyalty to the will of the Father however bitter the cup or painful the price” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, 251).

**“I am the light and life of the world”** To review a discussion of the complete significance of this profound statement, please *The Concept of Light* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

**“I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me”** See Mosiah 15:7 which contains the phrase “the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father.” Thus we learn that Christ’s submitting “even unto death” meant that he submitted to the will of the Father. Paul wrote, in referring to Christ’s Atonement, “. . . he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

**“[I] have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world”** The Lord Jehovah was certainly speaking for himself as well as his Father when he said to Moses: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Thus the Savior has glorified the name of the Father and his own name by atoning for the sins of mankind (see 3 Nephi 11:11) and enabling men to glorify themselves (see 3 Nephi 19:29) (see also Isaiah 53:12; Luke 22:29; and D&C 132:31). In ways that perhaps are not completely clear, when you persist in obedience and inherit a celestial resurrection, you glorify the Father and the Son.

**verses 10-11** The Son’s introduction of himself includes the following five important ideas: (1) The prophets have testified of me. (2) I am the light and life of the world. (3) I have drunk the bitter cup. (4) I have glorified the Father. (5) I have suffered the will of the Father in all things.

12 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.

13 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying:

14 Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

**verse 14** Note that the people are instructed first to “thrust your hands into my side.” To do this each person would place their hand inside his robe and place it on his chest near his heart. This was obviously a deeply intimate experience. Oh, that each of us may one day have that same intimate experience!

“**I am the God of Israel**” At this particular time, Israel is divided into three major branches: the Jews, the Nephites, and the lost tribes. In his resurrected body he has already ministered to the Jews, he is now ministering to the Nephites, and he will yet minister to the lost tribes of Israel so that each may know that he is their God (see 3 Nephi 17:4).

15 And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

**verse 15** Even though the power of the resurrection could have—and one day will—completely restore and make new the wounds of the crucifixion, Christ chose to retain these wounds for a purpose. In the last days at his second coming he will show those marks and prove that he was “wounded in the house of [his] friends.” The wounds in his hands, feet, and side are signs that in mortality painful things happen even to the pure and the perfect. They are signs that trials and tribulations are not evidence that God does not love us. It is the *wounded* Christ who comes to our rescue. That evidence of pain in mortality is undoubtedly intended to give courage to others who are also wounded by life, sometimes even “in the house of [their] friends.”

Since two thousand five hundred souls were present at this assembly (3 Nephi 17:25), no more than a brief contact would have been possible, and even that would have required some hours.

Here Jesus graphically and publicly demonstrates the reality of his resurrection and hence the reality of the resurrection of all men. Some three thousand years previously the prophet Enoch was told that a record (the Book of Mormon) would come

out of the ground in the last days “to bear testimony of [the] Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea and also the resurrection of all men” (Moses 7:62).

**16 And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:**

**17 Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.**

**verse 17** *Hosanna* means “save now, we pray thee (or we beseech thee).” This expression is usually associated with the hope and expectation of the coming of Christ. This is the so-called hosanna shout. Its origins are traceable at least as far back as the Hallel, an ancient Jewish festival hymn. Latter-day Saints use the Hosanna Shout at temple dedications. Here the Nephites are using an expression of profound worship, respect, love and gratitude.

**18 And it came to pass that he spake unto Nephi (for Nephi was among the multitude) and he commanded him that he should come forth.**

**verse 18** The prophet Nephi was “among the multitude” and had obviously not sought any special recognition or attention from the Savior.

**19 And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet.**

**verse 19** What a sacred and choice privilege for Nephi! His entire ministry had been one of testifying of Jesus, and now he was able to worship him personally and demonstrate his adoration for him. We are reminded of the statement in general conference of Elder Bruce R. McConkie just days prior to his death:

I am one of his witnesses, and in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet and shall wet his feet with my tears. But I shall not know any better than I know now that he is God's Almighty Son, that he is our Savior and Redeemer, and that salvation comes in and through his atoning blood and in no other way (*CR*, April 1985, 12).

**20 And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him.**

**21 And the Lord said unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven.**

**verse 21** Here the Lord sets Nephi apart as mortal head of the Nephite church. Specifically he gives to Nephi the power to baptize. This is the authority that Latter-day Saints usually associate with the Aaronic Priesthood. The reader may recall that following the preaching of Samuel, the Lamanite prophet, many did believe and went unto Nephi and were baptized (Helaman 16:3-4). If Nephi already had authority to

baptize, why is it necessary for the Savior to give him that power yet again? Joseph Fielding Smith addressed a related question:

There is nothing strange in the fact that when the Lord came to the Nephites, Nephi was baptized and so was everybody else although they had been baptized before.

The Church among the Nephites before the coming of Christ was not in its fulness and was under the law of Moses. The Savior restored the fulness and gave to them all the ordinances and blessings of the gospel. Therefore, it actually became a new organization, and through baptism they came into it.

We have a similar condition in this dispensation. The prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were baptized by command of the angel John the Baptist. Several others were baptized before the organization of the Church. However, on the day the Church was organized, all who had been previously baptized were baptized again, not for the remission of sins, but for entrance into the Church. In each case the reason was the same (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, volume 3, 205-06).

There is a principle demonstrated here. Just as baptism was needed following the establishment of the Savior's church on earth, even of those who had previously been baptized, so was a re-ordaining of the brethren to the priesthood. In addition to ordaining Nephi, the Lord will call eleven others and similarly ordain them (see the following verse). At the end of the day Jesus will also give these twelve the "power to give the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 18:37), undoubtedly the Melchizedek Priesthood.

It is interesting to note that beginning with this verse and continuing for the next twenty-three verses, the word *baptism* or some form of that word is found some nineteen times attesting to the importance with which the Savior regarded that ordinance. If the reader wishes to review the full significance of the baptismal ordinance, see *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth* in volume 1, chapter 18 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

**22 And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize. And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you.**

**23 Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them— Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them.**

**24 And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying:**

**25 Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**26 And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water.**

**verse 26** The practice of baptism by total immersion did not begin with Christ's mortal ministry, rather long before his ministry (see Moses 6:64; Mosiah 18:14-16). Yet, part of the rich symbolism connected with this method of baptism is related to the death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior. Those who performed baptisms prior to Christ's mortal ministry knew and understood that symbolism.

The third and final period of an organized church of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon record will be established during Christ's visit (see a discussion of these three periods in the commentary for 2 Nephi 6:2).

**27 And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.**

**verse 27 "the Father and I are one"** Jesus had previously spoken of this type of "oneness" when he prayed to his Father that the apostles "may be one, as we are" (see John 17:11, 21-22).

**28 And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.**

**verse 28** We are not told the nature of the disputations that "have hitherto been" among the Nephites.

**29 For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.**

**30 Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.**

**verses 28-30** Brother Byron R. Merrill has provided us a helpful article, "There Was No Contention" (*The Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi Through Moroni, From Zion to Destruction*, edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., 167-83). His article will be utilized in the following discussion. The words *contention* or *contend* in scripture actually have two quite separate meanings.

1. In a more positive sense, they mean "to strive," "to dispute earnestly," or "to defend and preserve." This meaning seems applicable in some modern revelation: "Contend thou, therefore, morning by morning; and day after day let thy warning voice go forth" (D&C 112:5). Similarly, see the command to "contend against no church, save it be the church of the devil" (D&C 18:20). Likewise, this meaning may be inferred when



Jude admonishes us to “earnestly contend for the faith” (1:3) or when Paul says he was bold “to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention” (1 Thessalonians 2:2).

2. In the Book of Mormon, *contention* always carries a negative meaning—that of fighting or asserting or defending a position with the added element of anger. Contention is therefore related to disputation. Heated passions play a part. It is this meaning that applies in these verses and in other verses in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 26:32; Helaman 1:2, 18; 3:19; Mosiah 19:3; Alma 50:26; 19:28; 22:22; 3 Nephi 7:7 and several others). The word *contention* is often associated with wars. The absence of contention in the Book of Mormon is mentioned as a quality of a Zion or heavenly people.

To properly understand the concept of contention, it is necessary to understand the negative underpinning of contention which is anger. Anger is “a feeling of sudden and strong displeasure and antagonism directed against the cause of an assumed wrong or injury” (*Funk and Wagnells*). Anger is a conscious and split-second judgment that an injustice or insult has been committed and it involves a choice as to how one’s reaction will be expressed—the reaction is expressed with hostility rather than forbearance or charity. Anger is a conscious and deliberate act. The Lord will provide the celestial law to the Nephites regarding the phenomenon of anger: “Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment” (3 Nephi 12:22). In this statement by the Savior, he is unequivocal in his condemnation. He does not discuss any particular types of anger such as “quick to anger,” or “cannot control anger,” or “continues in anger.” Even the idea that one may be “angry without a cause,” that appears in the King James Version, is missing in the Nephite version. The Savior simply warns against anger of any type. This is difficult doctrine since in some situations of obvious injustice or thoughtlessness, it would seem that anger is warranted. Reference has already been made to the idea that anger is result of judgments quickly made and a hostile reaction chosen. We have been commanded to “judge not unrighteously” (JST, Matthew 7:2). Also the Lord said, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10). But the realities of life often prompt us and urge us to judge people by their words or actions. We are actually not in a position to judge others’ motivations or render a verdict on the status of their hearts. Only the Lord can do that. The Lord taught the prophet Samuel, “For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

The Lord’s anger or wrath is often referred to in scripture, and it occurs in the context of his exercising a righteous judgment when his people have broken covenants with him. His anger is a feeling of strong displeasure and is obviously warranted and appropriate. We mortals, on the other hand, are simply not in a position to make judgments. Therefore, human anger is not acceptable. On rare exceptions there may be moments when the Lord’s Spirit moves us to know his will and to act in his behalf.

The Lord has indicated we should “reprove betimes with sharpness,” but only in those rare instances “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 121:43). “Betimes” implies in a timely manner—sufficiently early to do some good. “Sharpness” is probably most aptly interpreted to mean in a focused, clear, specific way not condemning the individual as a whole. McConkie, Millet, and Top, in their book *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume IV*, comment on the word “sharpness” and add a different slant to its meaning: “Testifying with ‘sharpness,’ as Moroni is here using the word, does not mean he was being contentious or mean-spirited. It means direct and to the point. It means not couched in soft, comfortable language but focused on what needs to be said more than on how to say it” (359).

When we feel anger, we declare ourselves judge, jury, and often, in the flash of the moment, executioner. Perhaps we could paraphrase the Lord’s directive to us regarding this matter in these terms: “I, the Lord, will feel anger [i.e., render judgment] toward whom I will; but of you it is required not to feel anger toward anyone.”

The book of Proverbs tells us that “only by pride cometh contention” (13:10). Certainly in a prideful, worldly, “natural man” setting, competition abounds. In that setting often when someone wins, someone else loses. This type of setting certainly tends to encourage the expression of anger. In an eternal setting, no one need lose. The irony in this latter setting is that a man “wins” only by helping others to “win.” Elder Boyd Packer wrote:

In this life we are constantly confronted with a spirit of competition. Teams contest one against another in an adversary relationship in order that one will be chosen a winner. We come to believe that wherever there is a winner there must also be a loser. To believe that is to be misled. In the eyes of the Lord, everyone may be a winner. Now it is true that we must earn it; but if there is competition in his work, it is not with another soul—it’s with our own former selves (*That All May be Edified*, 84).

**31 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine.**

**32 And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.**

**verse 32 “this is my doctrine”** The reader may wish to review the introductory commentary for 2 Nephi 31 regarding the doctrine of Christ. Here the Savior himself will summarize the essence of his gospel or his doctrine.

**“which the Father hath given unto me”** The Savior reminds us that although we refer to the gospel or doctrine of Jesus Christ, this gospel or plan of salvation did not originate with Jesus, but is indeed his Father’s.

**33 And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.**

**verse 33** The prophet Joseph Smith stated simply, “This eternal truth settles the question of all men’s religion. A man may be saved . . . in the terrestrial kingdom, or in the telestial kingdom, but he can never see the celestial kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit” (*TPJS*, 12).

**34 And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.**

**verse 34** For a brief discussion of what it means to be damned see the commentary for 2 Nephi 9:24.

**35 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost.**

**verse 35** “**he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost**” For an explanation of the concept of the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, see the commentary for 3 Nephi 19:13-14. Also, see *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18.

**36 And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one.**

**verse 36** “**for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one**” We clearly understand that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are three separate and distinct individuals.

We have been accused by the Evangelical (conservative) Protestants of having “Trinity Doctrine” in the Book of Mormon. They maintain that God is somehow simultaneously *three* and *one*, and they have no doubt because they feel the Bible and the Book of Mormon both tell them so. The threeness of God is quite literally an article of faith for the Latter-day Saints: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in his Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost” (Article of Faith One). We have neither reason nor interest in arguing against either the threeness of God or the unity of God as witnessed in the Bible or the Book of Mormon. We accept all of these scriptures. The testimony of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon concludes with the line “And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.” The Book of Mormon itself reads at 2 Nephi 31:21: “And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen.” Notice that these texts emphasize the unity of the Godhead by using a singular verb for the plural subject: the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost *is* one God. Also, in the Book of Mormon, the prophet

Abinadi declares, “God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—and they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth” (Mosiah 15:1-4). Additional LDS scripture testifying to the threeness and oneness of God can be found in Alma 11:26-29, 44, Mormon 7:7, and in D&C 20:21-28.

That the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God is a paramount doctrine of the Book of Mormon. We have always believed in the simultaneous oneness and threeness of God.

We also believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are separate and distinct persons. We can accept the formula of “one God in three persons.” However, we believe that the oneness of these does not imply an ontological oneness (literally one person)—one being. This idea is a creedal addition rather than a biblical affirmation. That is, it originated in the post-biblical creeds (Nicea AD 325, Constantinople AD 381, and Chalcedon AD 451). Rather, their oneness is but a oneness of mind, purpose, power, and intent, and perhaps there are aspects of their oneness we don’t even comprehend. The Godhead consists of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, “and these three are one” (1 John 5:7). The three persons are one God. What is not said in the Bible, but is said at Nicea and is rejected by Mormons, is that these three persons are ontologically one being.

Latter-day Saints believe the biblical concept of “oneness” or of “being one” is revealed at John 17:21-23, Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Galatians 3:28, etc., where the individual disciples can also be “one” in the Father and the Son, or “one” in Christ, or even “one” with each other in Christ—though still remaining separate beings with separate and individual bodies. Mormons accept John 14:11 as much as Evangelicals do: “Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.” But 14:11 should probably be read together with 17:21-22, which illustrates the nature of their oneness: “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.” This cannot imply ontological oneness or “co-inherence,” (an Evangelical Protestant term) since the disciples, who are indisputably separate and individual beings, can also be one in the Father and the Son in the same way that the Father and Son are one in each other. And this is not a philosophical extrapolation from the text using nonbiblical terms formulated centuries later. It’s what the text actually says!

Latter-day Saints are trinitarians in the sense that they truly believe in God the Father, in God the Son, and in God the Holy Spirit, and also in that they believe these

three are one God. But they are not trinitarians in the later creedal sense as defined at Nicea and Chalcedon because those creeds imposed nonbiblical concepts on the biblical data, and they used nonbiblical terms—*trinity*, *homoousios* (one essence or one substance), *consubstantial* (of one substance), *ungenerated* (not produced by procreation), *indivisible*, and so forth—in doing it.

**37 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things.**

**38 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.**

**verses 37-38** The phrase “as a little child” implies the antithesis of the natural man. The natural man, of course, cannot comprehend things of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14).

**39 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.**

**verse 39** The person who “buildeth upon my rock” has his life anchored to Christ.

**40 And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.**

**verses 39-40** “**And whoso shall declare more or less than this**” We in the Church never need equivocate about the fact that our Church is the only true church upon the earth (Ephesians 4:5-6). Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

That there is and can only be one gospel—one Church, one plan of salvation, one true religion—is as self-evident as any truth known to man. There can no more be two true gospels or two true churches than there can be two true and differing scientific facts. Truth is truth. And truth and salvation and the gospel all are ordained of God. They are what they are; and they are not what they are not. Men either have the truths of salvation or they do not; they either possess the gospel, which is the plan of salvation, or they do not. . . .

Anyone in heaven or on earth, in time or eternity, in Paul’s day or ours, anyone who preaches any gospel other than the true one [is accursed]. Why? Because there is no salvation in a false religion. There is no saving power in a man-made system of salvation. . . . And any man—whether mortal or immortal, whether man or angel—who preaches any system other than the very one ordained by Deity, leads men astray and keeps them from gaining celestial salvation (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 2:457-59).

Christ himself is the rock upon which we must build. As we come to believe in him and his teachings then we build upon the rock of Christ so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against us. This concept was taught previously by Helaman to his two sons, Nephi and Lehi: “And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his might winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

One might wonder if Helaman had obtained this concept from the writings on the plates of brass and whether this concept was once also found in the Old Testament. Could it be that Jesus was quoting from other revelations he had given to Old Testament or Nephite prophets when he gave this great sermon on the Mount of Beatitudes and in Bountiful? It seems possible he was.

Neal E. Lambert has pointed out an interesting pattern in the words of the Savior during this first day of his Nephite ministry (“The Symbolic Unity of Christ’s Ministry in 3 Nephi,” in *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, 196-97). Brother Lambert divides the first day into three segments: first, his appearing and establishing his doctrine; second, his preaching, in which he articulates the application of that doctrine; and third, his demonstrating the blessings of his gospel. Each of these three segments concludes with the same rhetorical figure—that of building upon the rock. This verse, then, marks the end of the first segment. The conclusions of the other two segments are recognizable by the metaphor of the “rock” and the “sandy foundation” (see 3 Nephi 14:24-27 and 3 Nephi 18:12-13).

**41 Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth.**

**verse 41** A charge to the missionaries!

## 3 Nephi Chapter 12

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 12-14** (compare Matthew 5-7) Jesus's sermon at the temple in Bountiful

**3 Nephi 12:48** (Matthew 5:48) I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

The Savior's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 has been considered by many to be the most influential and important text in all of Christianity. Chapters 12 through 14 of 3 Nephi contain an account of essentially the same sermon, this time delivered to the righteous Nephites at the temple in Bountiful. We may thus refer to this sermon in the Book of Mormon as Jesus's Sermon at the Temple or the Sermon in Bountiful. We will later learn that less than one percent of all those things taught by Jesus could be recorded in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 26:6). The importance of his Sermon at the Temple is thus obvious since considerable space is here devoted by the abridger Mormon to this sermon. As a covenant-making people, we Latter-day Saints take upon ourselves the obligation to emulate the Savior in our personal lives and thus commit ourselves to become more like him. Here in this sermon we encounter much material that helps to define our divine model.

It would seem that Jesus delivered this same or a similar sermon on other occasions in the Old World. In addition to 3 Nephi 12-14 and Matthew 5-7 (and JST Matthew 5-7) a similar, but shorter, discourse is reported by Luke—Luke 6:17-49—and is commonly called the sermon on the plain.

Many who have studied Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in the Bible (Matthew 5-7) have noticed that it seems fragmented. Does the Sermon on the Mount have a single theme or logic, or is it indeed a haphazard collection of unrelated sayings? There have been several theories among secular scholars as to how one might tie the Savior's sermon into a single unified whole.

Some assume that the sermon is intentionally a potpourri of widely diverse topics from which anyone may pick and chose at his will. They may pull out this piece and that without any regard for the original context. A common teaching in the Christian world is that this sermon was not delivered by the Savior on a single occasion, rather it is "made up of aphorisms, maxims, and illustrations which were remembered and treasured out of many discourses" (*Interpreters Bible*, volume 1, 279). Further, it has been suggested by secular scholars that the Sermon on the Mount is the literary work of the gospel writer Matthew. It has been noted that Matthew cited many teachings that appear in very different settings in the other synoptic gospels. Perhaps, some scholars suggest, Matthew simply redacted, or edited and arranged, all these teachings and created a hypothetical single sermon delivered by Jesus. We know that this is not the case, since



Jesus in 3 Nephi 12-14 delivers basically the same sermon as contained in Matthew 5-7. Also, Jesus will later observe that he had given a similar sermon in Palestine before he ascended to his Father (3 Nephi 15:1).

Why, then, does the sermon appear to be fragmented? There are some theories among LDS scholars as to how the sermon may be tied together. Those that seem to have significant merit include:

1. It is suggested that the fragmented nature of the sermon is due to the fact that different parts of the sermon were intended for different audiences. The first part (3 Nephi 12:1 through 13:24) was addressed to the multitude assembled in the land Bountiful. The second part (3 Nephi 13:25-34) was directed to the twelve disciples or apostles whom he had chosen. The final part (3 Nephi 14) was again delivered to the multitude.

2. Some have suggested that the main purpose of the sermon was Jesus's announcement of the fulfillment of the law of Moses and the coming of a new and higher law. It is certainly true that with the Savior's visit to them, the Book of Mormon people are about to make the transition between the old testament and the new testament—between the “old” covenant and the “new” covenant. The old covenant, simply stated, was that if Israel would obey the law of Moses including the ten commandments, they would receive the blessings promised to Abraham and his seed. Jesus had explained during his ministry in the old world that he had not come to destroy the old covenant but rather to “fulfill” or complete it (Matthew 5:17). Under the terms of the new covenant, more would be expected of those who live it. It would be more rigorous and demanding. But the spiritual rewards or blessings for obedient adherence to the new covenant would be correspondingly greater, even exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God. And where do we find the specific terms of this exciting new covenant? Perhaps there is nowhere in scripture that they are more clearly spelled out than in Christ's discourse recorded in 3 Nephi 12-14.

3. Brother John W. Welch has suggested that the sermon is really a “temple text” or the text of an ordinance or series of ordinances during which those righteous Nephites there assembled actually had a sacred temple experience wherein they entered into covenants with the Lord and received an endowment of heavenly power and blessings analogous to that which we may receive in the temples today. He sees the sermon as more than an ethical or didactic discourse. It is, he believes, a sacred ordinance designed to bind its hearers in sacred covenants. He points out that other such texts are found in the scriptures such as Jacob's speech at the temple in the city of Nephi (Jacob 2-3) and King Benjamin's speech at the temple of Zarahemla (Mosiah 1-6) (John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount*, [Copublished by FARMS: Provo, Utah and Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, Utah]). Brother Welch acknowledges the differences between our present-day temple experience and that had by the Nephites in 3 Nephi. He writes:

I do not think that the Nephite temple experience was exactly the same as today's—which itself changes somewhat from time to time. For example, the sequence in which the laws of obedience, sacrifice, chastity, consecration, and so forth are presented is not exactly the same in both, although it is quite close. And the Sermon at the Temple mainly reports the ordinances, laws, commandments, ritual elements, and covenants; little background drama or creation narrative is given. Moreover, the Sermon may have functioned in several respects more to prepare people for specific features of the temple or other ordinances than to conduct them through the experience itself.

It seems clear that in both the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple, Jesus introduced to his disciples the new order of the gospel, which they eventually accepted by way of oaths and covenants, with promises and penalties.

4. Robert A. Cloward sees the sermon as a missionary training sermon (“The Savior’s Missionary Training Sermon in 3 Nephi” in *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, 119-36). Brother Cloward postulates that the Sermon on the Mount in the Old World and much of the Sermon at Bountiful in the New world were both intended primarily for his apostles and not for the multitudes (see Matthew 5:1-2; 3 Nephi 13:25), and the sermons were intended primarily to teach his special witnesses what they needed to know before they went out to preach the gospel to the world. The Joseph Smith Translation version of Matthew 7:1 provides some insight: “Now these are the words which Jesus taught his disciples that they should say unto the people.” After the Savior ascended for the last time from his personal ministry among the Nephites, the Nephite disciples launched an intensive missionary effort (3 Nephi 26:17-21) that culminated in the conversion of all the people in the land and the establishment of a church which enjoyed nearly two hundred years of peace (4 Nephi 1:1-3). Brother Cloward sees the beatitudes as the Savior’s teachings to his disciples as to what characteristics they would encounter in their investigators.

John W. Welch has observed:

Ever since the publication of the Book of Mormon, one of the standard criticisms raised by those seeking to discredit the book has been the assertion that it plagiarizes the King James Version of the Bible, and the chief instance of alleged plagiarism is the Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi 12-14. Mark Twain quipped that the book of Mormon contains passages “smouched from the New Testament and no credit given.” Reverend M.T. Lamb, who characterized the Book of Mormon as “verbose, blundering, stupid,” viewed 3 Nephi 12-14 as a mere duplication of the Sermon on the Mount “word for word” and saw “no excuse for this lack of originality and constant repetition of the Bible,” for “we have all such passages already in the [Bible], and God never does unnecessary things.” “Careful examination proves it to be an unprincipled plagiarist” (John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount*, [Copublished by FARMS: Provo, Utah and Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, Utah], 125-26).

In our commentary for 3 Nephi 12-14, we will discuss several important differences between these verses and Matthew 5-7. If Joseph Smith had wished to simply copy the Sermon on the Mount into the Book of Mormon record, he could have done so. We will discover, however, rational and sensible differences which render it unwarranted to speak of the Sermon at the Temple as a mere plagiarism of the Sermon on the Mount. The differences are themselves a testimony as to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon as an independent and distinct record. Some of these differences may be explained by the setting of the Sermon at the Temple. Here the resurrected Jesus appears to the righteous survivors of a fierce storm and major earthquake in the Western Hemisphere which had destroyed the wicked from among them. They had gathered at the temple in the land Bountiful. These were a people more prepared to receive Christ's specific instructions than those who listened to his Sermon on the Mount. The Book of Mormon account thus contains the calling of the twelve and the performing of ordinances for those people prepared for baptism. The level of preparedness of these Book of Mormon people will be attested to by the two hundred years of peace and righteousness that will follow Christ's visit.

How can we explain the use of the King James language of the biblical sermon in 3 Nephi, and what does this teach us about the translation process used by the Prophet Joseph? Do we not believe that our King James biblical version is a seventeenth century translation of a corrupted Greek text of the Savior's sermon? Then why do the two versions share so many similarities? There is no evidence that Joseph utilized the King James Bible in the process of translating the Book of Mormon (see *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon*, in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, Appendix A). The words Joseph dictated into the Book of Mormon text were provided him by the Lord through the truly miraculous and remarkable process of translation. Just why the Lord chose to use much of the wording of the King James scholars is unclear at this time. We may simply speculate that the Lord wished to use language familiar to Joseph and his contemporaries.

3 Nephi 12:1-12 contain the section of the Sermon at the Temple (compare Matthew 5:3-12) we refer to as the Beatitudes. The word "beatitude" means a perfect state of happiness or blessedness. The word "blessed," which is translated from the Greek *makarios*, is rich word which signified a sublime state of well-being. It has been alternatively translated, "Oh, the happiness of" or "Oh, how happy are they." Perhaps this state of blessedness refers to a state of sanctification wherein an individual is ready and qualified to enter the celestial heaven. Or, perhaps we don't have to wait until the judgment to receive the tangible rewards of obedience to the gospel. It is possible that we may achieve a "blessed" state here in this mortal existence. This will likely come as we are blessed to feel the presence of the Lord through the influence of the Holy Ghost. We will be endowed with spiritual confidence, as our faith grows and turns to spiritual

hope—see “The Fruits of Faith” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 11, *Other Notes on Faith*.

The Beatitudes are certain specific instructions in which Jesus teaches how a man may attain a state of perfection and eternal happiness or blessedness. Christ’s audience is given a glimpse of the heights to which they may rise. If they are obedient to the laws which he is about to teach them (3 Nephi 12:19-20), their inheritance will be the kingdom of heaven and the earth. They will have peace, comfort, and mercy. They will see God and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And, they will be called the children of God. They may in fact become gods.

The repeated use of the second person you or ye (recall that “you” is singular and “ye” is plural) in verses 1-2 suggests that the blessings and promises in this chapter were bestowed upon each Nephite gathered there, much as a ritual or ordinance blessing would be bestowed.

It is hoped that the student will discover that Jesus’s sermon was not simply spliced naively into the text of the Book of Mormon. Rather, its presence here is not only appropriate but also essential.

**1 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.**

**verse 1** The Sermon at Bountiful contains two new beatitudes not found in the Matthew account. The first is contained in this verse. It says essentially, “Blessed are those who give heed to the teachings of their ordained leaders and who are baptized and have faith in Christ.” The second new beatitude is found in the following verse. It is of note that both of these new beatitudes are included in Joseph Smith’s inspired revision of Matthew 5—JST Matthew 5.

**“I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost”** As has just been mentioned in the commentary for 3 Nephi 11:35 above, the concept of baptism of fire is explained in the commentary for 3 Nephi 19:13-14 and in *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18. Note the related expression in the following verse, “. . . for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.”

One important difference between the Sermon on the Mount in the gospel of Matthew and the Sermon at the temple is that Matthew's account gives no clue as to how Christ's followers were organized ecclesiastically or about any institutional procedures or relationships. This has led many secular scholars to regard it as a code of private conduct that is quite independent of any religious society or organization. The Sermon at the temple, on the other hand, has much to say. In this verse for example, Christ refers to his twelve disciples and the need to come unto him by baptism and receive the Holy Ghost. It is clear that the Beatitudes are given primarily for the saints, for members of the Church of Jesus Christ who have come out of the world, put behind them the world, received the gospel ordinances, accepted and received the Lord's anointed servants, and committed themselves to Christ and his kingdom.

Although the twelve that Jesus called and ordained will be referred to as "disciples" throughout 3 Nephi, it is clear that they were apostles, special witnesses with apostolic authority.

**verses 2-12** Before considering that part of the Savior's sermon we call the beatitudes, let us briefly consider the proper interrelationship between man's self, God, and other men. We will avoid here a consideration of this interrelationship from the perspective of the evil or wicked natural man (the "telestial man") who would be inclined to ignore God and take advantage of others. Rather we will include a consideration of this interrelationship only from the perspective of the honorable or "terrestrial" natural man and the "celestial" man who is characteristically lacking in natural man characteristics.

The terrestrial man's view of this relationship is basically one of equity and fairness. He realizes that he is not entitled to more than his fair share, but he will certainly have that share which is rightly his. He realizes that he must look out for himself and do it vigorously because no one else is apt to stick up for him. He must insist on fairness and justice for himself in all situations. Other men are likely to take more than is fair, and hence constant watchfulness is appropriate and necessary. In all of this he takes his cue from God who is also fair and just. In his insisting on justice in the affairs of this world, he feels vindicated and justified, as he knows that God is also just and fair. He feels that God applauds his efforts in enforcing justice in all situations.

The celestial man lives, in some measure, not for the sake of this mortal life, but in consideration of his eternal future. He is constantly aware of God's great love for him and his utter dependence on God for his eternal welfare. He is so profoundly aware of and grateful for God's goodness, mercy, and blessings that his only thought is to do everything he can to make others aware of these great blessings. He yearns to "share the wealth." He is keenly aware of his own selfishness and other frailties and shortcomings which awareness adds to his gratitude to God since he knows that God accepts him as he is. He also sees these same shortcomings in others but is inclined to

be sympathetic and tolerant of these failings in others. Out of gratitude to the Lord, his wont is to overlook the ubiquitous selfishness of others. He yearns for these others to succeed eternally in spite of their human failings. If he could, he would hide the sins of others from the Lord; he would become their advocate before the Lord. He tends to look beyond the weaknesses of others.

In the Sermon at the temple, and particularly in the beatitudes, the Lord spells out the celestial standard of these key interrelationships—those between self and God and self and others. Generally, in the beatitudes the Lord emphasizes different specific aspects of the ideal or celestial interrelationships among self, God, and others.

**2 And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.**

**verse 2 “more blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized”** Here is the second “new” beatitude not contained in the Matthew account.

**“shall receive a remission of their sins”** Here is a reminder that a man’s sins are not remitted or “washed away” by baptism. Rather they are remitted or burned out of his soul by the Spirit of God in response to that man’s striving to repent. “For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17).

**3 Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**verse 3** The “poor in spirit” are those who sense their estrangement and emptiness and realize their utter dependence upon the Lord. The poverty referred to here is that of the man who is fully conscious of the inadequacy of all human resources. A modern translation, the Godspeed Bible, renders this phrase, “Happy are those that feel their spiritual need.”

Those who are truly “poor in spirit” are willing to submit completely to the teachings of the Savior. They are as little children, eager to surrender their will to his. Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught:

**As the Lord communicates with the meek and submissive, fewer decibels are required, and more nuances are received. Even the most meek, like Moses, learn overwhelming things they “never had supposed” (Moses 1:10). But it is only the meek mind which can be so shown and so stretched—not those, as Isaiah wrote, who “are wise in their own eyes” (Isaiah 5:21) (*Wherefore Ye Must Press Forward*, 47).**

**“who come unto me”** This is a phrase of clarification not contained in the Matthew account. It appears five times in the Sermon at the Temple (see also 3 Nephi 12:19, 20, 23). Those “who come unto [him]” are the individuals who inherit the kingdom of heaven—those who will be exalted. Coming unto him requires repentance and baptism, and therefore coming unto him is essentially a covenantal concept. Only those who “come unto [Christ] with full purpose of heart” (verse 24) through his prescribed ordinances will be received or allowed to enter into his presence.

#### **4 And again, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

**verse 4** The Lord is not suggesting here that mourning for mourning's sake is a virtue. Rather, there are certain kinds of mourning that he commands us to experience. One is mourning for our fallen nature, natural self, and our resultant tendency to commit sin (see Nephi's “Psalm” in 2 Nephi 4:16-35). One sign of a true saint is that he or she is “willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:9). To mourn in this setting means to have compassion, empathy, or to “suffer with” those who are suffering. Also, those who mourn as they suffer well the vicissitudes of mortality are said to “suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world” (Jacob 1:8). These shall eventually find rest with him who mourned as no other individual on earth has ever mourned.

This verse promises that the sorrow of the mourning will be “comforted,” that is, their sorrow will be turned to joy.

#### **5 And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.**

**verse 5 “blessed are the meek”** To be *meek* is to be mild of temper, soft, gentle, not easily provoked or irritated; yielding; given to forbearance when injured; not peevish or apt to complain. The “meek” are the poor in spirit, the humble. The “meek” are not the timid, the spiritless, the fearful. Is it possible to be meek, and yet be a vociferous advocate of others? Indeed, it is. In fact the most forceful dynamic personality who ever lived described himself as being “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). Meekness has been defined as power under control. Meekness and humility are the opposite of pride. True humility is a gift of the Spirit which, like all gifts of the Spirit, must be earned. The individual blessed with the gift of humility sees himself and his relationship to God in a proper eternal perspective. While he may acknowledge his own efforts—his accomplishments and knowledge—he feels keenly his frailties and weaknesses. He is loath to elevate himself above others.

**“they shall inherit the earth”** This phrase means they shall inherit the celestial kingdom of God which will, of course, be established upon this earth after it is celestialized.



## **6 And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.**

### **verse 6 “Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness”**

While there is a veil drawn over the mind of man when he leaves his former premortal state and is born on earth, this veil is not complete. There remains within us a dim memory and subtle yearning for eternal things. A sliver of the light of Christ penetrates the veil for all men. Though withdrawn from our memories, the spiritual progress which we made in the life before this one is not lost and wasted as we leave that pre-existent phase. Those talents and abilities and the testimony of righteousness which were earned there by diligence and obedience remain within us in a latent state. These proclivities may be referred to as our “gifts” or “talents.” We have only to discover them and work to develop them to awaken them to our memory. Man is intended to perceive his fallen mortal state with a sense of deprivation, unfulfillment, and incompleteness. These disquieting feelings are intended to engender a deep feeling of distress and a need to be rescued or redeemed. He should hunger and thirst for the influence of the Spirit as a starving man craves food and drink. Man’s distress in his fallen condition should create the desire to escape the fall and reach out for the Savior. This verse uses the terms “hunger” and “thirst” to describe man’s longings for his premortal identity and his yearnings to be rescued from his lonely mortal condition.

Still another shade of meaning here is the idea that each man must be proactive in his spiritual growth. It is so easy to become passive in the process. A man should be anxiously seeking areas in his own life where he should repent. The Spirit of God is most willing to help in this process by revealing to the willing mind and heart those areas in which a man lacks the attributes of Christ. “For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

**“filled with the Holy Ghost”** This verse significantly amplifies the meaning of Matthew 5:6 which simply states “Blessed are they . . . for they shall be filled.”

## **7 And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.**

**verse 7** Here is an example of the law of restoration which we have previously discussed. For a more complete discussion of the law of restoration see the introductory commentary Alma 41. What is the law of restoration? Briefly, when latter-day saints hear the term *restoration*, they typically think of the latter-day return of the church and gospel to the earth. Book of Mormon prophets, however, use this term in a different sense. They teach that each individual will receive both a temporal restoration and a spiritual restoration which they deserve and have earned. Simply stated, this law holds that in the resurrection all men will be raised to that level of glory commensurate with the lives they lived in mortality. Each man will be judged by his works and the intent of his heart—called in scripture his “desires.” If a man’s works and the desires of

his heart in this life are good, then in the judgment the man will be restored to that which is good. If his works and desires are evil, then in that last day, evil will be restored to him. And, it is not merely a “black and white” or “all or nothing” proposition. Among all of the Father’s children, there exists every shade of grey between good and evil. That which a man sends out shall be returned to him in kind. This law is also referred to as the “law of the harvest” (see also 3 Nephi 13:14-15).

This verse provides a specific example of the law of restoration. We shall be judged according to the judgments we render. To the degree that we are merciful with others, God will be merciful with us.

### **8 And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**

**verse 8 “blessed are all the pure in heart”** There are few absolutes in our spiritual progress, hence what does it mean to be pure in heart? It must mean to be actively striving to overcome the natural self, striving to obeying the commandments, and largely succeeding. Then one regularly receives the blessing of justification (forgiveness of sin) from the Holy Ghost, and one’s heart is “clean.”

**“for they shall see God”** We are promised in scripture that the obedient will all see God. D&C 93:1, for example, teaches, “It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.” Two questions always arise when these verses of scripture are discussed: (1) Will we see him literally? and (2) When will we see him? Certainly this promise applies literally for the diligently obedient following this life. They will not only see God as soon as they die (Alma 40:11-14), but they will remain to live with him forever.

But does this promise only apply to our postmortal life? The scriptures tantalize us with the possibility of an audience with him during this mortal life. This audience might be literal (see the discussion of having one’s calling and election made sure in the commentary for Helaman 10:4-7 and also in *Calling and Election Made Sure in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine* volume 2, chapter 16), or it may be figurative. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord explains one way that God can be seen in this life: “And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it; Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God” (D&C 97:15-16). To see God in this sense, according to Elder Royden G. Derrick, means to come to know God, discover him, visualize him, recognize him, and understand him (*Temples in the Last Days*, 80).

### **9 And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.**

**verse 9 “blessed are all the peacemakers”** A *peacemaker* is someone who strives actively and sincerely to dispel any contention in his human interrelationships. People find myriad reasons, in this world, for contention in their relationships and it takes many forms including resentment, jealousy, anger, grudges, feelings of being wronged, competitiveness, and many others. A peacemaker doesn't allow these negative feelings to continue, and he diligently strives to remove any such from his relationships with others. The essence of accomplishing this peace is sincerely feeling and expressing your love for the other person. Generally speaking, it is much easier to feel and express love for another person when you are assured that the other person reciprocates or will come to reciprocate that love, though we are required also to love our enemies. A person can only maintain a celestial relationship with another person when he loves the other—when he or she has genuine charity for that other person.

**“they shall be called the children of God”** They shall become a permanent part of the Lord's eternal family in the celestial heaven.

**10 And blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**verse 10 “who are persecuted for my name's sake”** Being persecuted while bearing the name of Jesus Christ and while trying to be Christlike is nothing new. Paul wrote, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). And we will be blessed for it. How great is our reward? “All that my Father hath shall be given unto [you]” (D&C 84:38). And how do we endure the painful persecution? “He also gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ” (Alma 31:38).

**11 And blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake;**

**12 For ye shall have great joy and be exceedingly glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.**

**verses 10-12** It is not sufficient to be *good*. One must also be *strong*. It is one thing to live up to a high standard in the face of ease, but quite another thing to do so in the face of adversity. Don't fear those who can kill only the body—but only those who can kill the soul.

**13 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.**

**verse 13 “I give unto you to be the salt of the earth”** In an age before refrigerators, salt was the great preservative. In this well known metaphor, Jesus

compares his disciples to salt. A righteous disciple in the Lord's kingdom will serve to maintain, in fact, to "preserve" the Lord's teachings and way of life, not only in the kingdom, but also, by example, in the world at large.

**"if the salt shall lose its savor"** Salt does not lose its savor with age. Rather, its savor is lost through admixture and impurities. The Lord's metaphor in this verse may be a warning to avoid any contamination of God-given teachings with the philosophies of men or the corrupting influences of those who are inclined to evil. The Lord encourages his disciples to maintain a pure and undefiled gospel and to season the world with their tasteful living. Contaminated salt has lost its "savor" or tastefulness and can only be discarded.

**"but if the salt shall lose its savor . . . the salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men"** If one views this verse in context, it seems likely that it is an invitation to enter into a covenant with the Lord, but this covenant carries with it a solemn warning that those who violate the covenant will be cast out and trampled under foot. Have each of us today entered into a covenant to be the "salt of the earth"; to succor and "preserve" others? We have indeed. It was at the time of our baptism. John W. Welch has pointed out a connection between this verse and D&C 101:39 which explains that those who enter into the everlasting covenant "are accounted as the salt of the earth" (*Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount*, [Copublished by FARMS: Provo, Utah and Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, Utah], 61-62). Matthew's account says simply, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13) with no explanation as to exactly who is the salt of the earth and how one becomes the salt of the earth. Hence, we learn that only those who enter into the covenant of baptism are counted among the "salt of the earth."

**14 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.**

**verse 14** Again, we read in the Matthew account, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). But to whom exactly was that verse in Matthew referring? Here, in the Sermon at the Temple, we learn in context that the Savior is referring to the important exemplary role of the believing covenant people who will later be referred to as "the people of my church" (3 Nephi 18:5).

**15 Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house;**

**16 Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

**verses 14-16** In what way does a servant of the Lord serve as a "light" to the people. The saints are commanded to serve as examples, to maintain a "godly walk and conversation" (D&C 20:69). Others ought to be able to identify the saints by their

behavior and conversation. There may also be a richer and more profound sense that one man might serve as a light to others—see the commentary for 3 Nephi 13:16-18.

**17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil;**

**verse 17** The “law” and the “prophets” are two of the three major parts of the holy scriptures that the people then possessed. The Jews called them the *Torah* (the Law) and the *Nevi'im* (the Prophets). The third part was the *Ketuvim*, the Writings, or poetical works, such as Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The *Torah* is the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).

Jesus was not destroying or canceling out all those sacred writings any more than a university professor is destroying basic arithmetic by teaching calculus. He came not to abolish but to complete. As the Latter-day Saints would say to other Christians—or to Jews, Muslims, or anyone else—we do not come to erase any truth you already have but to fulfill, to complete, to add to what you have with the fulness of the everlasting gospel. We would say, as the Lord said, “I do not bring it to destroy that which [you] have received, but to build it up” (D&C 10:52). And Joseph Smith added, “We don’t ask any people to throw away any good they have got; we only ask them to come and get more” (*TPJS*, 275).

The words of this verse would have been provocative to the Old-World Jews of Jesus’s day. For the Jews, the law had ceased to be a means to an end and had become the end itself. They viewed the law as the source of salvation. Jesus’s message here was that he, not the law, is the source of salvation. With the old law fulfilled in Christ’s coming, a new covenant with Israel became necessary. The Sermon on the Mount is a statement of that new covenant.

**18 For verily I say unto you, one jot nor one tittle hath not passed away from the law, but in me it hath all been fulfilled.**

**verse 18** It is interesting to compare this verse with the corresponding verse in the New Testament, Matthew 5:18. At the time of the Sermon on the Mount in Palestine, the fulfillment of the law still lay in the future, but by the time of the Sermon at the Temple, the law of Moses had already been fulfilled by Jesus’s atonement, death, and resurrection as Jesus had proclaimed out of the darkness at the time of his death (see 3 Nephi 9:17). Hence, when Jesus spoke in Palestine he said, “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,” but in Bountiful in this verse he affirms that one jot or tittle “hath not passed away from the law, but in me *it hath* all been fulfilled” (see also 3 Nephi 12:46-47, italics added).

The Lord did not do away with any of the commandments associated with the law—murder or adultery, for example. Instead he invited his disciples to ascend to a

loftier more challenging law that they might achieve a higher spiritual level of gospel living. In this way the law was said to be fulfilled in him.

**19 And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled.**

**verse 19 “I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father”**

Here the Savior makes it clear that the teachings of his Sermon at the Temple are being given expressly by way of commandment. Scholars have long debated the basic nature of the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount. Are they the foundation of a new public order, a set of ideals, a set of commands, a law of the future kingdom but not of the present church—rules applicable only for a brief period before a shortly awaited coming of the kingdom, or general conditions of discipleship? In this verse and in 3 Nephi 15:10 and in 3 Nephi 18:10, we learn that they are commandments and are necessary if an individual is to “come unto Jesus.” Just as the commandments given on Sinai formed the basis of the Old Testament, the commandments of the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount form the basis of this new covenant or new testament. Our regarding of the Book of Mormon as “Another Testament of Jesus Christ” is all the more meaningful, since the word *testament* in Greek literature usually means “covenant.” John W. Welch wrote:

As “Another Testament” or “covenant,” the Book of Mormon indeed reestablishes a modern-day understanding of God’s commandments, which his people agree to obey by covenant (see D&C 21:1). Accordingly, the Doctrine and Covenants admonishes the Saints to “remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon” (D&C 84:57) (*Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount*, [Copublished by FARMS: Provo, Utah and Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, Utah], 31).

**“come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit”** The offering of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, indeed submitting our will completely to his, is simply the new law of sacrifice. This new law of sacrifice supersedes the practice of sacrifice under the law of Moses. Do we really live the law of sacrifice today? We do indeed. We are commanded to lay on the altar of sacrifice a broken heart and contrite spirit. But, practically speaking, what does this mean? What do we really sacrifice? We must sometimes even sacrifice those things that are good, fair, and just for those things that are celestial.

It is interesting to note that in the corresponding verse in the Sermon on the Mount, a severe penalty is mentioned for breaking even one of the least of the commandments: “he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.” Another severe penalty missing from the Nephite sermon that is found in the Matthew account is contained in Matthew 5:29-30: “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it



from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.” The absence of these penalties in the Sermon at the Temple provides support to the idea that these penalties were not originally a part of the Sermon on the Mount but were interpolated from Mark 9:43-48, as some Bible commentators have suspected.

Penalties are not entirely absent from the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon at the Temple. The strict injunction to “give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” is present in both the Nephite and Matthew accounts. Holy and sacred things are not to be shared or broadcast indiscriminately. Doing so was punished in the ancient world by severe penalties, often mentioned in connection with oath swearing and covenant making.

**20 Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.**

**verse 20 “except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time”** The law of Moses was now fulfilled, and Jesus was providing his disciples a new law. The focus of the new law was the perfection and strengthening of the heart. As stated above, it is clear that he gave the injunctions and instructions in the Sermon at the Temple as “commandments.” No such designations appear in the Sermon on the Mount. Hence, biblical scholars have long debated whether Jesus’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount were intended as celestial ideals, ethical or religious principles, or as social commentary. It is also clear that the Nephite people received these commandments by entering into a covenant with God that they would always remember and keep those commandments that Jesus gave to them that day (see 3 Nephi 18:7-10 and the commentary for those verses).

Another interesting difference between the Sermon on the Mount in the gospel of Matthew and the Sermon at the Temple is the absence of unflattering references to specific groups such as scribes, Pharisees, and publicans. The verse in Matthew which corresponds to this verse in 3 Nephi is Matthew 5:20 which says, “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Anti-Pharisaism has been observed to be a tendency of Matthew, and hence its addition to the Sermon on the Mount may be the result of Matthew’s influence on the biblical sermon. We might expect these influences to be missing from the Sermon at the Temple, and indeed they are. Also missing from the Nephite sermon are unflattering references to the publicans such as are found in Matthew 5:46-47.



**verses 21-45** In these verses the Lord contrasts the requirements of the law of Moses with those of the new covenant. He is teaching the spirit of the new law and in these verses he provides illustrative examples. In the old law there are outward acts which are forbidden or commanded. In the new law we are commanded to change the inward state of the heart and mind. For example, in the old law murder was forbidden. But in the new law, the Lord commands that we overcome anger, contempt, condemnation, retaliation, and vengeance, even toward our enemies. We must do good to those who seem to least deserve it. Those beholden to the old law were forbidden to commit adultery, but Jesus updated that commandment to preclude even lustful thoughts. Previously Israel had been commanded to bind themselves with oaths that they might not bear false witness. The Savior's new law demands the ungarnished truth in all circumstances.

Inward attitudes and feelings are more difficult to change than outward actions. Our actions are on public display and others may pressure us to change them if they are not appropriate. We are able, on the other hand, to hide our attitudes. We can retreat into them. If the quality of our thoughts is unwholesome, we can wallow in our own mire without anyone's knowing. The private retreat of our own thoughts can contain all our struggles, our insecurities, our fears, our weaknesses, our anxieties, and in spite of it all, we may possess these thoughts and yet maintain an outward dignity without others' being aware.

**21 Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, and it is also written before you, that thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment of God;**

**verse 21 “and it is also written before you”** This phrase is an interesting addition to the corresponding verse in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:21. John W. Welch has pointed out:

The Nephites relied heavily on the written law. Their ancestors treasured the plates of brass, also relying heavily upon those written records for specifications regarding the law of Moses and how they should keep it. Being cut off from most sources of oral or customary Israelite law, the Nephites saw the law primarily as a written body (see 1 Nephi 4:15-16) and viewed any change in the written law with deep suspicion (see Mosiah 29:22-23). The Jews in Jerusalem in Jesus's day, on the other hand, had an extensive body of oral law to accompany the written Torah, and the oral law was very important in the pre-Talmudic period of Jewish legal history (*Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount*, [Copublished by FARMS: Provo, Utah and Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, Utah], 131-32).

Accordingly, the Sermon on the Mount is apt to say simply, “Ye have heard that it was said . . .” (Matthew 5:27, 33, 38, 43). Whereas the Sermon at the Temple is more likely to say, as does this particular verse, “It is written” (3 Nephi 12:27, 33, 38, 43).

**“whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment of God”** This phrase is more specific than the corresponding phrase in Matthew 5:21: “whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.”

**22 But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.**

**verses 21-22** In Matthew 5:22 we read, “whosoever is angry with his brother *without a cause*” (italics mine). The phrase “without a cause” is deleted from both the JST Matthew version and the Book of Mormon account. Unrighteous anger is evil whether or not it is preceded by provocation. The wording in this verse is more like the demanding sayings of Jesus regarding committing adultery in one’s heart (Matthew 5:28) and loving one’s enemies (Matthew 5:44), neither of which offers the disciple a convenient loophole of self-justification or rationalization.

It is interesting that the phrase “without a cause” is also absent in most of the best and earliest Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Joseph Smith could hardly have guessed that this phrase did not originally belong in this passage, because textual criticism of the Bible was scarcely in its infancy in America in 1829. And yet, significantly, the parallel text here in the Sermon at the Temple agrees with those early manuscripts, precisely lacking the phrase “without a cause.” The most important New Testament manuscripts in which the phrase is absent were not discovered until after Joseph Smith’s death.

It is felt by some Bible scholars that the Greek word *eikei* (without a cause) may be a late addition to Matthew 5:22. If so then the Book of Mormon accurately reflects the original meaning of the Savior and the original sense of Matthew 5:22.

The term “raca” is an Aramaic term of contempt and derision. Other translations render the term “empty head,” “simpleton,” or “good for nothing.” It is a value judgment, and as such the man who uses it is guilty of judging others and is thus attempting to assume the prerogatives of God.

**“whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment”** If this experience of hearing the Savior’s sermon was, for the Nephites, something akin to a temple endowment experience and entering into sacred covenants, then we may want to place this verse in the setting of a priesthood brotherhood. The implication is that the offended person is a “brother” who has power to render judgment. Anyone who calls his brother “Raca” is in danger of being brought before “the council,” that is, the elders in charge of administering the kingdom. It is a prohibition against speaking evil against any other priesthood brother, let alone against God. It prohibits all manner of evil or

unholy speaking against any brother, and thus all the more so against the Lord's anointed leaders. Such disciplinary procedures are especially pertinent within a community of covenant people.

**23 Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee—**

**verse 23** One might expect that Jesus is teaching here: "Before you come unto me, if you should discover that you have unkind feelings toward someone, first go to that person and resolve them." But that is not what the Master says here. He says instead: "Before you come unto me, if you should discover that another has unkind feelings toward you, then first go to that person and resolve them." We might be prone to respond, "But that's his problem! No, the Lord answers, it is our problem as well. I am my brother's keeper, and if one has aught against me (and I know about it) then I have a Christian responsibility to do what I can to humbly set things straight, to apologize if I am somehow at fault, and in general to rectify the situation. Should the offended one refuse my hand of fellowship, I have done what is expected of me.

**24 Go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you.**

**verses 23-24** This is difficult doctrine. We cannot come unto the Lord "with full purpose of heart" while there exists conflict and discord between us and any other individual. This may be referred to as the principle of reconciliation. No disciple can come unto Christ or enter his presence until first being reconciled to his brothers and sisters.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the wording is somewhat different: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (Matthew 5:23-24).

The Sermon on the Mount speaks of leaving one's sacrifice on the altar because it is addressing an audience prior to the fulfillment of the old law of sacrifice. At this time in the New World, however, the law of Moses has been fulfilled, and the Savior has already explained the new law of sacrifice (verse 19).

**25 Agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him, lest at any time he shall get thee, and thou shalt be cast into prison.**

**verse 25** The phrase "in the way" is a translation of a Greek phrase which refers to the commencement of a lawsuit.

**26 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence until thou hast paid the uttermost senine. And while ye are in prison can ye pay even one senine? Verily, verily, I say unto you, Nay.**

**verses 25-26** Elder Bruce R. McConkie has interpreted these verses as “Counsel to avoid lawsuits and entangling legal difficulties, lest fine and imprisonment result, is directed particularly to the apostles and missionaries as they go forth to carry the gospel message to a wicked world. It is more important that they suffer legal wrongs than that their ministries be hindered or halted by legal processes” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, volume 1, 223).

**“until thou hast paid the uttermost senine”** Instead of “farthing” as appears in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:26, Jesus here mentions “senine” which is a Nephite unit of exchange. It was the smallest Nephite measure of gold (see Alma 11:8-10). The senine was important because it was the amount paid to each Nephite judge for a day’s service at law (see Alma 11:3). Apparently, the losing party in a lawsuit was liable to pay the judges one senine each, a burden that would give potential litigants all the more reason to “agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him.”

**27 Behold, it is written by them of old time, that thou shalt not commit adultery;  
28 But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart.**

**verses 27-28** What is lust? One young male college student asked a question with tongue-in-cheek, “What is the difference between lust and ‘aesthetic appreciation?’” Perhaps lust may best be defined as having impure intentions before even gazing upon the woman, and then gazing upon her for the purpose of exciting an evil desire. A man guilty of lust has little intrinsic or built-in controls. He is restrained from committing fornication or adultery only by a lack of opportunity or fear of the immediate practical consequences.

The new law or covenant requires purity of heart. The sanctity of God-ordained marriage is so important that even the “lustful look” is destructive. This verse is a commandment that the righteous must strictly exercise the virtue of self-control. It also implies a warning that if a person violates the law of chastity, the penalty will involve serious consequences (Alma 39:5).

**29 Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart;**

**verse 29 “suffer none of these things to enter into your heart”** “These things” include anger (verse 22) and lust. It is interesting to note that the Sermon on the Mount allows justifiable anger (Matthew 5:22), but the Sermon at the Temple prohibits any anger in the heart at all, even justifiable anger.

**30 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.**

**verse 30 “wherein ye will take up your cross”** It is man’s “natural” tendency to be drawn toward worldly pleasures and travel down worldly paths. To do the unnatural things is to “cross” oneself. We “cross” ourselves when we turn away from worldly lusts and seek instead for righteousness. In scripture to “cross” oneself is the same as to “take up one’s cross.” To his disciples in Jerusalem, Christ said: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

**31 It hath been written, that whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.**

**32 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whoso shall marry her who is divorced committeth adultery.**

**verses 31-32** Jesus’s teachings here are clear. Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate to that effect. But anyone who divorces his wife, except in the case of adultery, makes her an adulteress, and whosoever marries such a divorced woman commits adultery.

During Christ’s mortal ministry in the Old World, Jewish law allowed divorce but there was some controversy over what comprised valid reasons for divorce. Rabbi Shammai taught that divorce was permitted only on grounds of adultery, but Rabbi Hillel, famous for his liberal views, taught that there were several valid causes for divorce, “even if she burns his soup” (Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, 13-14.) Moses, in his day, had allowed the Israelites to divorce for reasons other than adultery. Given this background, see the interesting dialogue on this subject between Jesus and some Pharisees in Matthew 19:3-9. Jesus’s stand on this matter is unequivocal.

Isn’t this a rather strict stand? Does the policy of the Church today square with this unbending policy? For civil divorce? For temple divorce? The answer is no, the Church today certainly recognizes civil divorce and may even grant a temple divorce for causes other than infidelity. How can this be? Have we not read and understood the New Testament and these verses in 3 Nephi 12? Are we as a Church above the law Jesus taught concerning divorce? The answer is “no,” we are not above the law. We are below it! Jesus is here teaching the Celestial law. We as a Church are not yet ready to live up to that law and are still living, in a sense, a “lesser” form of the law.

**33 And again it is written, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths;**

**verse 33 “thou shalt not forswear thyself”** To forswear one’s self, is to swear falsely; to perjure one’s self.

**34 But verily, verily, I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne;**

**35 Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool;**

**verse 35** Matthew 5:35 has this verse as “Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.” Here obviously there is no mention of Jerusalem. No Nephite would be inclined to swear “by Jerusalem.”

**36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair black or white;**

**37 But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever cometh of more than these is evil.**

**verses 33-37** The practice of oath taking was given to the ancient Jews as a tenet of the law of Moses. “If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth” (Numbers 30:2). Now, the law of oath-taking is done away. Christ commands the saints to be simply and totally honest in all their dealings. We should not have to swear by external things. We should speak with our mouths only what we truly mean in our hearts. When we say “yea” then let the truth of the matter be yea; when we say “nay” let nay be the true word.

Jesus was not opposed to covenantal promises, only to oaths sworn in the wrong way.

**38 And behold, it is written, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;**

**verse 38** The law of Moses, the old law, dictated an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but the new law is different.

**39 But I say unto you, that ye shall not resist evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;**

**verse 39 “ye shall not resist evil”** You should not be so insistent on perfect justice. You should be more merciful and forgiving.

**40 And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also;**

**41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.**

**42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away.**

**verses 38-42** In Jesus's day and even now, the most insulting of all physical blows is that of striking the right cheek with the back of the hand. This was a particularly difficult principle to live in the Old World since the members of this new community of Jesus's were everywhere subject to insult and persecution because of their relationship to Jesus.

Regarding the phrase "whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile," Josephus, in his writings, referred to the compulsory carrying of military supplies by civilians in those days. Apparently Roman law authorized troops passing a district to commandeer the people and compel them to carry their luggage. To comply with this law often resulted in great inconvenience.

A broader principle here is that the saints should pay their taxes, abide by the laws of the land, and submit to those public burdens attendant upon citizenship.

The spirit of forbearance, love, and forgiveness is evident in these verses.

**43 And behold it is written also, that thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy;**

**verse 43** It is not known where this is written. It is not found in our present-day Old Testament, and it would be surprising if it were written on the brass plates. It is thought that perhaps Jesus was responding to the Essenes, an ultra-orthodox group of Jews who were taught to love the "sons of light" (the believers) and hate the "sons of darkness" (the outsiders). Whether or not such apostate beliefs were held among the Nephites is not known.

**44 But behold I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you;**

**verses 43-44** All men are neighbors to the man who has assumed the responsibilities of discipleship. How is it possible for one to become so large and magnanimous that he might actually come to love his enemies? At the risk of sounding almost blasphemous, let me ask of you the reader a hypothetical question. Suppose for a moment that you were the son of God, the savior of mankind. You are on the earth with the sacred message of the eternal gospel that must be promulgated to mankind. You are their only hope. You are keenly aware of all the frailties of God's children, but you also know well the eternal plan of salvation. Only you know of that plan and how vital it is that men accept it. In this hypothetical circumstance, with the unique perspective which it would afford you, what would be your attitude and feeling toward men? They are absolutely dependent upon you and your message. Even if they reject you, you can place that rejection in perspective. They "know not what they do." We can therefore understand how the Savior might love mankind in spite of their reviling against him. But is it not true that each of us who possesses the gospel and a testimony of it is,



in our own right, a savior of mankind. The Lord “has no hands but our hands.” We must serve mankind and carry the saving message of the gospel to them. As we live the gospel and gain a testimony of our own eternal identity, we will acquire the “blessed,” celestial state of “spiritual confidence.” This state, provided to us by the influence of the Holy Ghost, seems to be the key for our acquiring the charity, the pure love of Christ, which we must acquire.

It is so vital that we acquire the gift of charity that Jesus, when asked which was the greatest commandment, taught that there were two to which he accorded the status of being the greatest commandments. We are commanded to love God and to love our fellow beings (Matthew 22:36-40). Paul taught that though a saint possesses all virtues yet lacks charity, he is “nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). How might we define a good Latter-day Saint? Perhaps he is one who attends his meetings, pays his tithing, keeps the Word of Wisdom, and attends the temple. Is a loving nature included in our definition? Should it be? Do we as a Church give proper emphasis to this principle? Do we, in the Church help each other to learn to love?

But doesn't this verse set an almost impossibly high standard? How is it actually possible to love one's enemies? Perhaps the answer is that we must force ourselves to act in a friendly and loving way toward our enemies even if our feelings would dictate otherwise. Then, as written by Brent L. Top (*Though Your Sins Be As Scarlet*, 105-07), in time, if our efforts are genuine, our feelings will come along.

**45 That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.**

**verse 45 “for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good”** God, who is a loving parent, loves all his children, even those who choose to disobey him.

Matthew 5:45 renders this phrase, “for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” It is not known why the Sermon at the Temple here does not mention rain. Perhaps there was less anxiety in Nephite lands over regular rainfall or perhaps less inclination among the Nephites to believe in the heavenly origins of rain.

**46 Therefore those things which were of old time, which were under the law, in me are all fulfilled.**

**47 Old things are done away, and all things have become new.**

**verses 46-47** As pointed out in verse 18 of this chapter and as emphasized in the commentary for that verse, at the time of the Sermon at the Temple, the law of Moses had been fulfilled.

**48 Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.**

**verse 48** Are you ever beset with a sense of hopelessness and frustration as you study the lofty standard set forth in the scripture?: “Be perfect,” “Love your enemies” (verse 44), “For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (D&C 1:31; see also Alma 45:16).

It seems obvious that no one of us mortals will emerge from this earthly sphere in a state of perfection—even as God is. What then is expected of us? What is *perfection*? Is his command for us to be perfect simply an example of divine hyperbole? Before we dismiss this command as unattainable, let us take careful a look at it.

The Greek word translated into English as “perfect” in Matthew 5:48 is *teleios*. This word is used in Greek religious literature to describe several things, including the person who has become fully initiated in the rituals of the religion. In Hellenistic Judaism, the word *teleioo* means “to put someone in the position in which he can come, or stand, before God” (Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, 8:82; citing Hebrews 7:19 and 10:1).

A few men in the scriptures had been described as being “perfect.” These include Seth (D&C 107:43), Noah (Moses 8:27), Job (Job 1:1), and Nephiah (Alma 50:37). They may have been referred to as being perfect, yet the scriptures record instance of mistakes which they made. How are they then “perfect”? The Greek and Hebrew words behind the English “perfect” may also be translated as “whole,” “complete,” “the end product of a process.” The Savior has the ability to make people whole or complete by forgiving them of their sins. The guiltless state that follows repentance and striving to live the commandments may well be the state of “perfection” spoken of in this particular verse. In this context, the Savior taught, “Whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled [with the Spirit of God]; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father” (3 Nephi 27:16). He doesn’t say “perfect” but rather “guiltless.” Aren’t they one and the same?

It would seem presumptuous to suggest an “expected minimum” of righteous thought and behavior here on earth that would be expected of us in order to obtain perfection, but perhaps we can risk a bit of presumptuousness. Certainly, in order to achieve this lofty state, a man must come to realize his dependence upon God and regularly pray for the presence of the Holy Ghost. He must certainly study the teachings of Jesus, “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3), and sincerely strive in specific areas to improve himself. He must practice some actual self-denial in disciplining the purity of his intentions and becoming submissive to the commandments as he understands them. If our efforts and our progress are judged satisfactory, then we will be forgiven and found “guiltless” or “perfect” before God. The type of perfection thus achieved has been referred to as “finite” perfection (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 567-78). There is another type of perfection, according to Elder McConkie, the “infinite” perfection achieved after this mortal sphere when we actually become as God is.

When the Lord commands us to be perfect, as he does in this verse, he may well be expressing the ultimate hope that we may at some future date achieve this “infinite” perfection or inherit “all that the Father hath” and become like him.

It is instructive to compare this verse with the corresponding verse in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:48): “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Jesus has now been resurrected with a glorified celestial body. He is therefore able to say accurately in this verse, “I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”

## 3 Nephi Chapter 13

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 13:33** (Matthew 6:33) Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

**1 Verily, verily, I say that I would that ye should do alms unto the poor; but take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven.**

**2 Therefore, when ye shall do your alms do not sound a trumpet before you, as will hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.**

**3 But when thou doest alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth;**

**verse 3** Here is a command to avoid ulterior motivation. Please see the commentary for verses 16-18 of this chapter.

**4 That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.**

**verses 1-4** Giving to the poor has always been an obligation placed upon the Lord's covenant people, and apparently there is a certain magic when one does so in secret. The new covenant requires more than just doing the right thing. It requires doing the right things for the right reasons. Righteous deeds need not necessarily be performed anonymously, but they should always be done without pretense—and perhaps even more—for a secret, sacred reason. Giving without seeking or accepting any praise or recognition is certainly the highest form of giving.

When I was a younger man, just out of high school, I recall reading the book *Magnificent Obsession* by Lloyd C. Douglas. Its central theme was that anonymous and selfless serving of others leads inevitably to personal spiritual growth. I was deeply moved by the book, and I became fascinated with the idea and yearned to discuss it with the author. I wondered where he had come up with this concept and whether or not he truly believed in the validity of the concept. Obviously the idea of giving in secret is an eternal gospel principle.

**5 And when thou prayest thou shalt not do as the hypocrites, for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.**

**verse 5** In a gospel sense, hypocrisy is the pretense of religious conviction in the absence of true conviction. It is the claim to religious commitment without the practice of religious principles. A hypocrite feigns belief, while the heart is really serving

personal pride and vain ambition. The Greek word translated as “hypocrite” in the New Testament is the word for an actor in a play, one who portrays someone different from the person he or she really is. Hypocrisy is a manifestation of the carnal or “natural man” and not of the truly converted “saint.”

In this verse and the following verse, the use of the singular pronoun “thou” may indicate that the Lord here is teaching the people how to pray individually in private. Latter-day prophets and apostles have made it clear that prayer is more than directing “mere words” or thoughts to deity. Prayer is rather “the pulsation of a yearning, loving heart in tune with the Infinite.” It is “a message of the soul sent directly to a loving Father.” It is “spirit vibration.” Prayer is having “a consciousness that there is something within us which is divine, which is part of the Infinite, which is the offspring of God, and until we can feel that harmony with that Infinite, we have not sensed the power of prayer” (David O. McKay, *Treasures of Life*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1962, 308, 302).

Prayer is attuning ourselves with the spirit or light that “proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space” (D&C 88:11-12). To “live without prayer is to live a mere animal existence. It is to leave the best part of our natures in a starving condition; for without prayer the spirit is starved, and men dwindle in their feelings and die in their faith” (George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*. 2 volumes. Ed. Jerreld L. Newquist. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974, 2:170).

**6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.**

**7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.**

**verse 7** Now the Lord shifts his focus to the plural pronoun “ye” suggesting that the Lord is now going to offer instruction in group prayer.

**“use not vain repetitions”** *Vain* means futile or without real significance.

The problem is in the vainness, not in repetition. In how many different ways can we bless our food? How many original prayers—original in the sense of novel or unusual language—can we offer? God is not offended by repetition, so long as the words are spoken from the heart and are sincere. The heavens withdraw themselves, however, in the face of vanity. Something is vain when it is empty, meaningless, or hollow. Whenever our prayers are meaningless and thus become trite or ritualistic religious jargon, having no feeling or emanating from a duplicitous heart, they accomplish little (McConkie, Millet, and Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume 4—Third Nephi through Moroni*, 81).

**verses 1-7** “Alms” may be better understood as good deeds. The emphasis here is on sincerity and upon having the proper motives. Your good deeds, your

prayers, and your fasting should be all done with sincerity and with pure intent, not for the recognition of others. While engaged in fasting it is proper to go about one's normal and usual activities without advertising the fact of your fasting.

### **8 Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.**

**verse 8** An important part of real prayer is to listen to the promptings of the Spirit who will teach us those things for which we should pray. Our natural selfish tendency is to pray for our wants and not our true needs. Paul wrote that the Spirit “helpeth our infirmities: 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. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27). A modern revelation also instructs us that “he that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God; wherefore it is done even as he asketh” (D&C 46:30). This process of real listening during prayer, of attuning our minds and hearts to the light of Christ, allows us to begin to gain the mind of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 2:16), and is the process by which we come to obtain answers to our prayers.

**verses 9-13** In these verses, we find the Lord's prayer. In offering this prayer, Jesus perhaps simply intended to provide a model or pattern for group prayers. It is unlikely he was providing a recommendation for a fixed prayer that he intended be recited verbatim. An alternate view holds that it is a sacred ritual prayer which was part of a covenant-making ceremony in which the Nephites here assembled were being instructed.

### **9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.**

**verse 9** The original text of the Book of Mormon contains Hebrew-like constructions that have been removed from the text of the Book of Mormon because of their non-English character. For example in this verse the “who” is appropriate because the referent is human. The original Book of Mormon text and the King James Bible both render this phrase “our Father *which* art in heaven” which is more typical Hebrew construction (see Matthew 6:9, italics mine).

### **10 Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**verse 10** Note that the phrase “Thy kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10) is missing from this Nephite version of the Lord's prayer. At the time of the Sermon at the Temple, unlike the Sermon on the Mount, God's kingdom had already come, both in heaven

through Christ's victory over death, and on earth through his activities that day with the Nephites.

It is noteworthy that the phrase "Give us this day our daily bread," found in the Matthew version, is missing. In the Galilee this counsel was directed specifically to the Twelve, those who would travel without purse or scrip. Their daily prayer needed to be for food and drink in order to sustain life. In Bountiful the phrase is omitted, as this portion of the sermon is directed to the entire multitude, a people whose daily work would sustain them (see 3 Nephi 12:1).

### **11 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**

**verse 11** The spirit of this verse is also found in verses 14 and 15. See the commentary for those verses.

### **12 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**verse 12** In other words, "Suffer us not to be led into temptation" (JST, Matthew 6:14).

### **13 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**verse 13** A doxology is hymn or phrase which praises God. This verse contains a doxology, and many Bible scholars have felt that it was added later by the Christian church because it contains what they have concluded to be language used much later than the days of Jesus. However, an early Christian document called the Didache or the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," which is dated first century AD, contains the Lord's prayer, including this doxology. The Book of Mormon, of course, serves as another witness of the fact that this phrase was contained in the original Lord's prayer.

### **14 For, if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you;**

### **15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

**verses 14-15** The Lord's prayer having ended, the Lord continues counseling the Nephites.

A modern-day revelation summarizes well these two verses: "My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened. Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin. I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds" (D&C 64:8-11).



Perhaps this is the ultimate challenge as we seek to emulate Christ. We have commented previously that, though Christ was called upon to atone for the sins of all mankind, each of our lives is, in a way, a mini-atonement as we suffer the vicissitudes and challenges of life. Each of us must suffer as a necessary process in the attaining of a God-like character. Perhaps there is no suffering quite so keen as “bearing” the sins and misdeeds of others—indeed, forgiving others.

Accomplishing the true process of forgiveness is often a somewhat anti-intuitive exercise. Please see a discussion of forgiveness in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 6, *Forgiveness*.

**16 Moreover, when ye fast be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.**

**17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face;**

**verse 17** True fasting requires a secret (see the following verse) inward righteousness. Fasting is something to be participated in privately, not something to be observed by others.

**18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.**

**verses 16-18** When a disciple seeks the Lord in true fasting and prayer the Lord promises that he will see and reward the supplicant openly in heaven. This principle is mentioned also in verses 4 and 6 of this chapter.

Perhaps we may generalize from this counsel of the Lord. All Christ-like virtues to which we may attain should be worn privately and inwardly, as an inward purity, and not outwardly as easily observable virtues. Even we ourselves should be unaware of them. This is the spirit of not letting our left hand know what our right hand is doing. If our left hand knows what our right hand is doing, if we become aware of our own hidden virtues, then we may create our own reward and fail to qualify for that which God intends to give us in his own good time. We should only be aware of the fact that we are striving to emulate the Savior’s example. Ironically, it is in this way that our own “light” may truly shine before others.

This is not to say that we should stop striving in the practical matters of work and service in the kingdom if we suspect that our motives are not completely pure. We must continue to consciously and deliberately “experiment upon the words” of Christ (Alma 32:27-29) even if we suspect that we are doing the right thing for the wrong reason. We should continue to home teach, for example, even if our central motivation is fear that our priesthood leader will call and find that we have not “completed our home teaching for the month.” We are never justified in doing the wrong thing or not doing anything at all because we suspect we are not properly motivated. We cannot wait until we are

sanctified before we start doing the work of the kingdom. Otherwise, we'll never become sanctified! The proper motivation will come, as do other gifts of the Spirit, as we strive to serve him.

**19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal;**

**verse 19** Earthly treasures are material possessions, honors, social affiliations, and political positions. All of these disappear when mortal life ends. The reader should enjoy the following parable of Jesus:

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, [and] be merry. But God said unto him, [Thou] fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So [is] he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:13-21).

**20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.**

**verse 20** The only things we “take with us” are (1) the gifts of the Spirit—our spiritual growth or progress, (2) our meaningful relationships, and (3) our wholesome memories.

**21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

**22 The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.**

**verses 19-22** One may view these verses as an elaboration of the law of consecration, the command to consecrate all that one has and is to the Lord. A “single eye” refers to singlemindedness and dedication, especially in the sense of being ready for sacrifice and un begrudging generosity toward the kingdom of God.

On another level, if our every thought, our desires, our aspirations, our hopes, and our dreams are all centered in righteousness—if our reason for being is to build up the kingdom of God—then we have an eye single to the glory of God. “And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

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 88:67-68).

**23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!**

**verses 22-23** In the Old Testament, there is abundant evidence that the "spiritual eye" or the "good eye" is a synonym for generosity (see Deuteronomy 15:9; Proverbs 22:9; 23:22; 28:22). Therefore, a possible interpretation of these two verses is that when a man is generous his eye is "healthy" or "single." When he is not generous, his "eye is evil." This interpretation is plausible and fits the context since the previous three verses warn against giving too much emphasis to laying up earthly treasures.

Again, on another level, sin and wickedness closes off receptivity to the light of Christ and leads to an inevitably fatal spiral (spiritually speaking) downward into more and more darkness.

**24 No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.**

**verse 24** "Mammon" is an Aramaic word for riches or money.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

There neither are nor can be any neutrals in this war. Every member of the Church is on one side or the other. . . . In this war all who do not stand forth courageously and valiantly are by that fact alone aiding the cause of the enemy. "They who are not for me are against me, saith our God." (2 Nephi 10:16.) We are either for the Church or we are against it. We take its part or we take the consequences. We cannot survive spiritually with one foot in the Church and the other in the world. We must make the choice. It is either the Church or the world. There is no middle ground (CR, October 1974, 44).

Robert L. Millet taught:

Holding back or giving less than is required always produces divided loyalties. We need not have our membership records in the great and abominable church in order to be disloyal to the kingdom of God; the issue is not where our records are but rather where our hearts are. . . . Our hearts cannot be wedded to another endeavor. Our might or strength cannot be spent in secondary causes. Our minds cannot be committed to another enterprise. In the words of the early brethren of this dispensation, it must be the kingdom of God or nothing! (*An Eye Single to the Glory of God*, 7, 9).

**25 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked upon the twelve whom he had chosen, and said unto them: Remember the words**

**which I have spoken. For behold, ye are they whom I have chosen to minister unto this people. Therefore I say unto you, 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. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?**

**verse 25** This verse marks an important transition. From 3 Nephi 12:1, we know that all the sermon to this point had been addressed to the multitude at large. Now, with this verse Jesus shifts his focus to the Twelve and counsels them regarding their coming ministry.

**“take no thought for your life”** This phrase may be better understood as “Don’t be overly concerned about . . .” It is important to note that this instruction to take no thought about food or drink or clothing is often quoted out of context to apply to everyone. It is actually counsel directed only to those involved in full-time ministry. Jesus promised his Twelve that their needs would be met if they would build his kingdom as their first priority. For the rest of us, whose ministry is only part-time, we must indeed take thought for our physical upkeep and not expect that God or others will take care of all our needs.

**26 Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?**

**27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?**

**verse 27** There is no need to worry, since worrying is usually unproductive. Which one of you, for example, by worrying can add one cubit to his height?” Although the standard length of a cubit seems to have varied somewhat through time and among cultures, it was roughly equivalent to the distance from the elbow to the tip of the fingers, or about 18 inches.

**28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin;**

**29 And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.**

**30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, even so will he clothe you, if ye are not of little faith.**

**31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?**

**verse 31** The word “wherewithal” refers to the means, supplies, materials, or even money necessary to accomplish a purpose.

**32 For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.**

**33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.**

**verse 33** The “kingdom of God” refers to the Church of Jesus Christ on the earth. Jesus is here instructing his missionaries to concern themselves with the building up of the kingdom of God on the earth.

**34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient is the day unto the evil thereof.**

**verse 34** There’s enough to worry about today without giving excessive care to tomorrow.

**“Sufficient is the day unto the evil thereof.”** There’s enough evil to contend with today without worrying about what’s coming tomorrow.

**verses 25-34** These verses were intended for the Lord’s apostles. They are called upon to forsake their temporal pursuits and carry the message of salvation to the world. There is not now and never has been a call to the saints generally to “sell that ye have” and take no thought for the temporal needs of the present or future. Rather, as part of their mortal probation, the true followers of the Savior are expected to provide for themselves and their families (D&C 75).

### 3 Nephi Chapter 14

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The Savior now turns his attention back to the multitude indicating that his messages which follow are for all members of the Church.

**1 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he turned again to the multitude, and did open his mouth unto them again, saying: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Judge not, that ye be not judged.**

**2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.**

**verse 2 “with what measure ye mete”** *Mete* is a verb which means to measure; to ascertain quantity, dimensions, or capacity by any rule or standard.

**3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?**

**4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother: Let me pull the mote out of thine eye—and behold, a beam is in thine own eye?**

**verse 4** Even though there is a “beam” (a large timber used for construction of buildings) in my eye which prevents me from seeing much of anything, I think I notice that you have a “mote” (a sliver or speck of wood) in your eye. The prophet Joseph Smith said, “No man is capable of judging a matter, in council, unless his own heart is pure; and we frequently are so filled with prejudice, or have a beam in our own eye, that we are not capable of passing right decisions” (*TPJS*, 69).

**5 Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother’s eye.**

**verses 1-5** Even though verse 1 commands that you judge not at all, verse 2 implies that it is probably necessary, at times, to judge our fellow men in certain circumstances, so long as we do it righteously. Indeed JST-Matthew 7:2 says, “Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged; but judge righteous judgment.” Of course it is necessary to take a stand and acknowledge evil actions of others. Church members are required to make many judgments every day. Discernment is a gift of the Spirit and the Lord intends us to use it. Righteous judgment and discerning are attributes of godliness the saints are commanded to seek. Mormon taught, “For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil . . . And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged” (Moroni 7:14-18).

When the Lord warns against judging, he is warning against condemning someone for his sins as well as against attributing motives to a person when the observer cannot really know what is in that person's heart. When Jesus encountered the woman taken in adultery, he did not deny the ugliness of her immoral actions. But he did not condemn her. He counseled her to go her way, repent, and sin no more, no doubt assuring her (implicitly, if not verbally) that forgiveness and peace of soul would follow (see John 8:3-11).

Part of condemning another consists of highlighting or accentuating another's sins—parading or displaying them before the public. We must keep in mind that we ourselves are also guilty of sin—often more egregious sins than we might condemn in others.

Later on, the Savior will say to the Nephite Twelve: “All things are written by the Father; therefore out of the books which shall be written shall the world be judged. And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be [as judges]? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:26-27).

## **6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.**

**verse 6 “that which is holy”** Joseph Smith's inspired translation of Matthew 7:6 adds considerably to the meaning of the New Testament verse which corresponds to this Book of Mormon verse: “Go ye into the world, saying unto all, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come nigh unto you. And the mysteries of the kingdom ye shall keep within yourselves; for it is not meet to give that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls unto swine, lest they trample them under their feet. For the world cannot receive that which ye, yourselves, are not able to bear; wherefore ye shall not give your pearls unto them, lest they turn again and rend you” (JST-Matthew 7:6).

As Jesus sends his disciples out to teach the gospel to the world, he commands them to refrain from presenting more of the truths of the gospel than their hearers are prepared to receive.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

Missionaries ordinarily confine their teachings to such things as the nature and kind of being that God is, the atonement of our Lord, the apostasy from and restoration of the gospel, and the plan of salvation. After people are converted and have the gift of the Holy Ghost to enlighten their minds it is time enough for them to learn the deeper things pertaining to exaltation in the eternal worlds. The sacred teachings revealed in temple ordinances, for instance, are mysteries reserved for selected and faithful members of the kingdom who have attained sufficient stability and background to understand them (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:248-49).



There has been some speculation that Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and his Sermon at the temple might have been more than simply a great sermon. The suggestion has been made that it might have contained significant "holy things" given to a righteous body of saints in a temple setting. Perhaps both of these great sermons were something akin to the endowment ritual. This might help explain Jesus's warning about making known "holy things" to those not yet ready (see John W. Welch in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, 337-38). See also the commentary for Alma 12:9.

**"trample them under their feet"** Set them at naught, consider them of little or no worth.

**"turn again and rend you"** And even attack you, the bearer of the pearls. Enemies of the Church are inclined to hear about sacred spiritual truths, distort their meanings, and then use their distorted version to attack the Church. Examples have included the doctrines of polygamy, eternal progression and becoming more like God, and that of one true Church.

**7 Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.**

**8 For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.**

**9 Or what man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone?**

**10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?**

**11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?**

**verse 11 "If ye then, being evil"** Here is a reference to the natural self of each man.

**verses 7-11** Our practical experience in this mortal life suggests that this promise may not be subject to an entirely literal and unqualified interpretation. When we receive gifts from the Lord, be they knowledge, material possessions, or other blessings, there are conditions that must be met before the blessings are bestowed. For example, if one anticipates asking for knowledge, one should know the conditions by which and circumstances under which knowledge is granted (see the commentary for Alma 12:9-11). Personal preparation is necessary. Joseph Smith explained: "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what he will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them" (*TPJS*, 149). Also, we must learn to ask for the appropriate things. "And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you (3 Nephi 18:20). See also James 4:3 and 2 Nephi 4:35.

The “good things” the Father will give us in response to our righteous petitions may be those things of eternal worth which will be granted in the eternities, rather than during this mortal experience.

**12 Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.**

**verse 12** Here is the golden rule. This verse may be regarded as a rephrasing and an explanation of the command “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:39).

**13 Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat;**

**14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.**

**verses 13-14** A gate is a point of access into a place or state, and this term is often used figuratively by the Savior and his prophets to represent the portal of entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. These verses make clear that there is only one gate and one narrow (“strait”) way that leads to eternal life. In modern revelation, we find an important commentary on these verses: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory [godhood]. For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives [eternal posterity], and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me. But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also. This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law. Broad is the gate, and wide the way that leadeth to the deaths [cessation of the family unit in eternity]; and many there are that go in thereat, because they receive me not, neither do they abide in my law” (D&C 132:21-25).

**“strait is the gate, and narrow is the way”** For a discussion of why the word *strait* (rather than *straight*) is appropriate in these two verses, see the supplemental article *Strait and Straight in the Book of Mormon*.

**15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves.**

**verse 15** Included in this category of “false prophets” are those in the Church who profess special skills or talents, those who offer insights above and beyond what the apostles and prophets feel should be made known. As though by divine appointment, they seek to re-chart the kingdom of God. They feel some special sense of mission to set the Church straight and spend their days striving to “steady the ark.” They tend to run before their file leaders and are impatient with the direction of the

restored gospel. They may even propose adjustments in the plan of God. Unless they repent, they, and all who attend to their messages will be cut off from the people of the covenant.

**16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?**

**17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.**

**18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.**

**19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.**

**20 Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.**

**verses 15-20** We may judge a prophet by what comes of the work he sets in motion.

**21 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 who is in heaven.**

**22 Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?**

**23 And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**

**verses 21-23** There is something left out of these verses. They suggest that good works alone will not be sufficient to qualify an individual for entrance into the Lord's kingdom. How is it that the Lord has not known them ("I never knew you" in verse 23)? Surely he knows everyone, and it cannot be that he is unaware of these people. There must be some other sense in which he does not know them. John W. Welch has provided a possible explanation: "The Hebrew word 'know' (*yada*) has a broad range of meanings. One of them is covenantal. [Speaking to Israel the Lord, through the prophet Amos, said] 'You only have I known of all the families on earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities' (Amos 3:3). . . . Yahweh had recognized only Israel as his legitimate servants; only to them had he granted the covenant" (*Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount*, [Copublished by FARMS: Provo, Utah and Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, Utah], 95-96). Certainly the Lord is aware of every being upon the earth, but he covenants with or "knows," in the special sense of these two verses, only those who do good works in his name who do so by the Spirit of God. Obviously the people referred to in these two verses fall short of that mark.

**24 Therefore, whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—**

**verse 24** The “rock” is the rock of revelation (*TPJS*, 274). Revelation must be modern, it must be current, it must be ongoing. An individual or a people who have access to and respond to this type of revelation are without question safe and secure regardless of the adversities that beset them.

**25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.**

**26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand—**

**27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.**

**verse 27** This verse completes the Savior’s sermon at the temple. The Matthew account adds an additional comment—that Jesus’s hearers in Palestine were “astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as [one] having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29). At first glance it would appear that this statement establishing Jesus’s authority is missing from the Nephite account. However, the first ten verses of 3 Nephi 15, have a prominent “authority theme” and clearly establish his identity and authority in a way much more compelling than this two-verse statement in Matthew. In 3 Nephi 15:1-10 Jesus will affirm that the instruction he had just given them contained “the things which I taught [in the Holy Land] before I ascended to my Father.” He will then explain: “I am he who gave the law” to Moses, and “the law in me is fulfilled.” He will further establish his identity, and thus his authority, by saying that he, Jesus, was the God who covenanted with Israel. He will further attest to his authority by saying, “I am the law, and the light. Look unto me . . . and ye shall live,” and he will promise that unto those who obey him to the end, he will “give eternal life.” Finally, he will aver, “I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments. And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.”

## 3 Nephi Chapter 15

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 15:4-5** The law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. I am he that gave the law.

**3 Nephi 15:21** (see John 10:14-16) Ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.

The Savior has now completed the Sermon at Bountiful. He will now provide in the remaining chapters in 3 Nephi a broad range of additional instructions including answers to questions, priesthood leadership training, patterns for ordinances and prayer, healing of the sick and blessing of children, scriptural exposition, and prophecy.

**1 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and said unto them: Behold, ye have heard the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father; therefore, whoso remembereth these sayings of mine and doeth them, him will I raise up at the last day.**

**verse 1 “ye have heard the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father”** This statement may imply that in the Old World Jesus reiterated the Sermon on the Mount to his apostles once again after his resurrection and before his ascension. Otherwise, he might have said to the Nephites, “behold, ye have heard the things which I taught during my ministry in Palestine”—referring to his Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus’s post-resurrection teachings to his apostles in Palestine are often referred to as the “forty-day literature.” Jesus instructed them in their priesthood duties, told them about their premortal existence and the creation of the world, taught of the purpose of this mortal life, and explained how they could return to God’s presence through obedience to the ordinances of the gospel. He blessed them with an initiation or endowment, generally called the “mysteries,” which emphasized garments, marriage, and prayer circles (see Hugh W. Nibley, “Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum: The Forty-Day Mission of Christ—the Forgotten Heritage,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987], 10-44; see also John Gee, “Forty-Day Ministry and Other Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus Christ,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:734-36.)

During those forty days between his resurrection and his ascension it seems likely that Christ’s Old World apostles received an endowment of heavenly power similar to our temple endowment. In Luke 24:49 Jesus’s apostles were instructed to remain in Jerusalem “until ye be endued [i.e., endowed] with power from on high.” Joseph Smith taught that Peter and John received the “fulness of priesthood or the law of God” at the

Mount of Transfiguration and that Peter “washed and anointed” all the apostles and received “the endowment” on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith* [Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980], 211, 246, 285 n. 8, 331).

**2 And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and wondered what he would concerning the law of Moses; for they understood not the saying that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.**

**verse 2** It is understandable that the people had trouble understanding that “old things”—the old covenant or law of Moses—had passed away, and that “all things had become new.” These Nephites and generations before them had known no other system of gospel living than the law of Moses. All of their worship, religious rites, and church organization were built upon that law.

**3 And he said unto them: Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.**

**4 Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses.**

**5 Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end.**

**verses 3-5** Jesus tries to explain and allay their concerns regarding this new order of the gospel. He reiterates his identity as Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, the Law Giver, and thus he documents his authority to change their religious practices.

**verse 5 “I am he that gave the law”** He was Jehovah, and every law by which the universe was framed, as well as those laws given to the people of Israel, issued forth from him (D&C 88:42). No law is greater than he, for he is the law (3 Nephi 15:9).

The Savior uses the phrase “I am” in connection with his self-identification as the great Jehovah who guided the prophet Moses. This is no accident, since Jehovah was known in ancient times by the name-title I AM (Exodus 3:13-15). I AM is the English rendering of a first-person singular present-tense form of the Hebrew verb *hayah* (“to be,” “to exist”). This divine name is referred to as the Tetragrammaton (Greek: “four letters”) and connotes continual or eternal existence, something like “I was, I am, and I will be”—all encompassed in one word. Significantly, the expression I AM is a name-title the mortal Jesus of Nazareth used to testify of his divinity, both before and after his resurrection.

We have previously mentioned that Christ will complete the establishment of his church among the Nephites. This is the third period of an organized church among the

Book of Mormon peoples. For a discussion of these three periods, see the commentary for 2 Nephi 6:2.

**6 Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled.**

**verse 6** The expression “the prophets” refers to the prophecies and teachings of the previous Book of Mormon prophets as well as the Old World prophets. The Nephites, of course, had access to the teachings of the Old World prophets through the brass plates. As the Nephites heard the Lord speak of fulfilling the law of Moses, doubtless many wondered whether these prophecies and teachings were still valid and relevant. The Lord assures them that they are.

**7 And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come.**

**8 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.**

**verses 5-8 “the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled”** The law of Moses, given by the Lord to the rebellious Israelites about 1440 BC, is fulfilled, but the Abrahamic covenant, made between the Lord and Abraham some 500 years earlier in about 1900 BC has not been fulfilled. For the convenience of the reader, we will review the tenets of the covenant the Lord made with Abraham:

1. Abraham would become the “father of many nations” (Genesis 17:19), and his posterity would be exceedingly numerous—even “as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore (Genesis 17:2; 22:17-18).

2. Those of the posterity of Abraham were blessed with certain lands as an eternal inheritance. This was the land of Canaan (Genesis 17:8) extending from the Nile River to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18).

3. Abraham’s posterity would prove to be a blessing to all families of the earth (Genesis 12:3). They would do this by bearing the priesthood and preaching the gospel to them. Thus will every family have the opportunity, through the posterity of Abraham, to enjoy the blessings of the gospel, which include the “blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:9-11).

4. All of these blessings of the gospel and the priesthood would be offered to all of Abraham’s mortal posterity.

The Abrahamic covenant will not find its fulfillment until after the final gathering of Israel in the last days.

**9 Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.**



**verse 9** **“I am the law, and the light. Look unto me”** He again testifies of his identity and authority and his ability to forgive sins and grant eternal life. He also emphasizes his role as the great Lawgiver and Exemplar—the supreme example of just how one ought to live.

**“for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life”** See the discussion on enduring to the end in the introductory commentary for 2 Nephi 31.

**10 Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments. And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.**

**verse 10** These instructions I have just given unto you are given by way of commandment. These commandments constitute “the law and the prophets.”

Jesus now turns his attention back to the newly called Twelve.

**11 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he said unto those twelve whom he had chosen:**

**12 Ye are my disciples; and ye are a light unto this people, who are a remnant of the house of Joseph.**

**verses 11-12** Throughout the Book of Mormon, the Nephite Twelve are designated as “disciples” rather than “apostles,” possibly to distinguish them from the twelve apostles of the New Testament. Although the roles of the two groups are similar, the Nephite disciples have particular stewardship over Nephi’s seed. The New Testament apostles are to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (1 Nephi 12:8-10). It seems clear that the Nephite disciples fully functioned as apostles (Moroni 2:1-2).

**13 And behold, this is the land of your inheritance; and the Father hath given it unto you.**

**verse 13** **“this is the land of your inheritance”** Our current concept of the lands in the Western Hemisphere that functioned as the home of the Book of Mormon peoples is that the entire story occurred in a limited, approximate 200 by 700-mile segment of central America. So, what land area is the Lord here bestowing on the descendants of Joseph as their “land of . . . inheritance”? This verse obviously does not help with that. Latter-day revelation suggests that perhaps North America may largely have that function. For example D&C 57:1-3 indicates that Missouri is the land designated by the Lord for the gathering of his people to Zion. Furthermore, Independence, Missouri, is the center place of Zion.

**14 And not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem.**

**verses 13-14** Jesus, during his mortal sojourn, was never commanded by the Father to tell his brethren in the Old World explicitly about the existence of the Book of Mormon peoples in the New World.

**15 Neither at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell unto them concerning the other tribes of the house of Israel, whom the Father hath led away out of the land.**

**verse 15** Nor was Jesus commanded to tell those in Jerusalem specifics about those of the ten lost tribes of Israel.

**16 This much did the Father command me, that I should tell unto them:**

**17 That other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.**

**verses 16-17** Even though he never revealed to them clearly and explicitly the existence of the New World Nephites / Lamanites, he did provide for them a somewhat general and ambiguous clue as to their existence (see John 10:14-16).

**18 And now, because of stiffneckedness and unbelief they understood not my word; therefore I was commanded to say no more of the Father concerning this thing unto them.**

**verse 18** The Jews, because of their “stiffneckedness and unbelief,” failed to understand the Lord’s somewhat veiled reference to the scattered remnant of the house of Israel in the New World.

**19 But, verily, I say unto you that the Father hath commanded me, and I tell it unto you, that ye were separated from among them because of their iniquity; therefore it is because of their iniquity that they know not of you.**

**20 And verily, I say unto you again that the other tribes hath the Father separated from them; and it is because of their iniquity that they know not of them.**

**verse 20** Again, reference is made to the lost ten tribes who are also separated “from them”—from the Jews. “And it is because of their [the Jews’] iniquity that they [the Jews] know not of them [the lost ten tribes].”

**21 And verily I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.**

**verse 21** “ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold” John 10:14-16 reads: “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the sheep: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them

also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” Most non-LDS scholars have taught that these “other sheep” referred to some future conversion of the Gentiles.

Many Protestant and Catholic biblical commentaries also identify these “other sheep” as the Gentiles (*Anchor Bible*, 29:396; Dummelow 792; *Interpreter’s Bible*, 8:626-27). The Savior’s teachings here in Bountiful provide a second witness of his words to the Jews. “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). The Book of Mormon people are indeed scattered Israelites.

## **22 And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching.**

**verse 22 “they understood me not”** The Lord’s Old World apostles failed to understand the Lord’s reference to the New World Lehtes.

**“for they supposed it had been the Gentiles”** The Lord’s Old World apostles, just as have the secular Bible scholars of today, made the mistake of thinking that Jesus was referring to a future conversion and gathering of the Gentiles.

**“They understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching”** The Lord’s Old World apostles erred in failing to understand that the eventual conversion of the Gentiles would occur through the direct preachings of the Jewish Twelve. Peter would not receive the revelation to begin preaching to the Gentles until after the Lord’s ascension (Acts 10).

## **23 And they understood me not that I said they shall hear my voice; and they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice—that I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the Holy Ghost.**

**verse 23 “And they understood me not that I said they shall hear my voice”** Jesus says in effect, “My Old World twelve (the first “they” in this phrase) misunderstood my statement that *‘they shall hear my voice’*” (italics added). The twelve assumed this second “they” was the Gentiles. They thought Jesus was prophesying that he would preach directly to the Gentiles. He would not. The second “they” in this phrase refers to other Israelites—specifically the descendants of Joseph in the New World (the people of the Book of Mormon).

**“they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice—that I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the Holy Ghost”** The Old World twelve misunderstood on two counts: (1) Jesus was not saying that the “other sheep” are Gentiles. Rather, he was referring to the New World remnants of scattered Israel. (2) Jesus was not suggesting that he would speak directly to the Gentiles. He implies that anyone with sufficient understanding should know that the “other sheep” who “shall hear my voice” must of necessity be Israelites, for “the

Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice” or see the resurrected Christ in person as a group. Even though the gospel would eventually be taken to the Gentiles by the Lord’s servants, the Lord would not go in person.

The experience the Book of Mormon people are having here is one that can only occur among Israelites. The Savior’s explanation clarifies such scriptural statements as Matthew 15:24: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and 1 Nephi 10:11 which suggests that after his resurrection, Jesus would “make himself manifest, only by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles.” That is, he would visit them through the Holy Ghost but not personally.

**24 But behold, ye have both heard my voice, and seen me; and ye are my sheep, and ye are numbered among those whom the Father hath given me.**

**verse 24 “ye have both heard my voice, and seen me”** This phrase seems to refer to the two groups of Israelites—those in the Old World and those in the New World.

**“and ye are my sheep, and ye are numbered among those whom the Father hath given me”** In this phrase the Lord addresses the Nephites there gathered at the temple in Bountiful.

### 3 Nephi Chapter 16

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**1 And verily, verily, I say unto you that I have other sheep, which are not of this land, neither of the land of Jerusalem, neither in any parts of that land round about whither I have been to minister.**

**2 For they of whom I speak are they who have not as yet heard my voice; neither have I at any time manifested myself unto them.**

**3 But I have received a commandment of the Father that I shall go unto them, and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that there may be one fold and one shepherd; therefore I go to show myself unto them.**

**verse 1-3** It seems likely that the Lord here refers to the ten lost tribes of Israel. Between 732 and 722 BC the armed forces of Assyria carried away captive the major part of the northern Kingdom of Israel which was inhabited by the descendants of the ten tribes of Israel, including the tribe of Joseph, the tribe from which many of us—in the Lord’s Church today—have descended. Subsequently we have referred to the descendants of these ten tribes as being “lost.”

Certainly some of them, and perhaps all of them, were scattered about among many of the earth’s nations. However, there is some scriptural evidence to suggest that perhaps a distinct group of the descendants of these lost tribes still exists somewhere, and that they have their own prophets and their own scripture. Verse 3 is an example (see also 2 Nephi 29:13; 3 Nephi 17:4). Is it really possible that such a group still exists? And if so, where?

As one reads the scriptural descriptions of the dramatic return of the ten tribes in the latter days, one cannot help but wonder if these passages of scripture are describing a discrete and sizable group of Israelites who will return en masse rather than part of a piece-meal gathering in of widely scattered Israelites from among the peoples of the earth. The Bible suggests, for example, that their return will be so spectacular that it will make the crossing of the Red Sea pale by comparison. Jeremiah says the Lord will lead the seed of Israel “out of the north country” and then comments: “It shall no more be said, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands whither he had driven them” (Jeremiah 16:14-15).

In latter-day scripture we read: And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves (D&C 133:26). Here we learn that wherever the ten tribes are, they have prophets among them who will lead them in their gathering. The record then continues: “And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep” (D&C 133:27).

Isaiah suggests that this miraculous highway may be the result of the drying up of the great deep, similar to the way the Lord parted the waters for Moses and allowed the Israelites to walk over on dry land. He says: “Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?” (Isaiah 51:10).

Apparently the returning Israelites will fill up the Western Hemisphere. Joseph Smith said one of the principal reasons the wicked will be cleansed from the earth is to make room “for the lost tribes of Israel from the north country” (*TPJS*, 1973 ed., 17).

Modern revelation indicates that the massive immigration pouring across the Lord’s mighty highway will saturate all of the arable land and require the settling of both deserts and barren regions. To solve this problem, the Lord says: “And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land” (D&C 133:28).

The Lord says these returning multitudes will bring with them vast treasures of precious things that will be turned over to the priesthood in the New Jerusalem, no doubt for the embellishment of the temple and beautifying of the great new capital city: “And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants” (D&C 133:30).

Apparently some day we will have access to the historical records of the ten tribes. The Lord told the prophet Nephi: “For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it. . . . And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel” (2 Nephi 29:12-13).

In Deuteronomy 31:4 Moses addresses scattered Israel and implies that a part of scattered Israel may even be located somewhere outside of this earth: “If any of thine be driven out unto the *outmost parts of heaven*, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee” (Italics added).

A possible extra-terrestrial location of this group is also suggested by Jesus’s proclamation: “He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, *from one end of heaven to the other*” (Matthew 24:31, italics added). Perhaps Jesus’s phrase “from one end of heaven to the other” corresponds to Moses’s “out unto the outmost parts of heaven.”

Prophets have suggested that the ten tribes will be gathered in from “the north countries.” One verse of scripture suggests that “north countries” refers to a place beyond the four corners of the earth: “. . . being gathered in from the four corners of the earth, and from the north countries” (Ether 13:11). Brigham Young said: “The ten tribes of Israel are on a portion of the earth—a portion separate from the main land” (Brigham Young, quoted by Matthais F. Cowley in his book, *Wilford Woodruff*, 448). All who read

the scriptures are familiar of the concept of God's technique of removing large bodies of people from the earth to some place especially prepared for them. The classic example is the City of Enoch: "And Enoch . . . built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion . . . and lo, Zion in process of time was taken up into heaven" (Moses 7:19-21). The City of Enoch was taken up and perhaps even that portion of earth on which the city was located.

Brother Cleon Skousen has also drawn upon the apocryphal Old Testament book of Esdras for some other suggestions regarding the lost ten tribes (personal communication). Before listing those suggestions, perhaps it would be appropriate to mention a few things about "the apocrypha."

In the King James Bible Joseph Smith used to create his inspired revision, there were fourteen books between the Old Testament and the New Testament known as the Old Testament Apocrypha. Most latter-day saints are not familiar with the apocryphal Old Testament books because they were eliminated from the King James Bible and all protestant Bibles in the early 1800s. They are still present in some Catholic Bibles, though there is some skepticism over their authenticity among the leadership of the Catholic Church. Today, if one is interested, these books are available and may be easily found and purchased.

When Joseph finished his inspired revision of the Old Testament, he inquired of the Lord on March 9, 1833, as to whether or not he should translate or revise these apocryphal books. The Lord in D&C 91 gave him, in essence, the following answer which is the position of the Church on the Apocrypha:

1. These books contain many things that are true, and they are mostly translated correctly.
2. There are also many things contained therein that are not true but are the false traditions of men.
3. There is no need to revise the Apocrypha.
4. Any member of the Church may read the Apocrypha, but he should make certain he has the Spirit with him to help him discern what is true from what is not.

We have come to apply this counsel more widely than to just the Apocrypha. For example, is it all right for a church member to read the Dead Sea Scrolls and accept as true those things which are witnessed as such by the Spirit? Yes, indeed!

There are literally hundreds of pieces of ancient literature that have been discovered. They are as old as the Old Testament books in our Bible. We do not accept them as canonized scripture, but certainly acknowledge that they may contain some truths.

Now, back to the book of Esdras. It indicates that the ten tribes, after they had been taken captive into Assyria, eventually decided to migrate north to a land that had never before been inhabited:



Those are the ten tribes, that were carried away prisoners out of their own land at the time of Osea, the king, whom Salmanasar, the king of Assyria, led away captive, and he carried them over the waters [Euphrates and Tigris Rivers] and so came they into another land. But they took this counsel among themselves that they would leave the multitudes of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt.

Anglo-Saxon tradition suggests that this people originally lived in large numbers around the Black Sea until the first century BC. They then migrated en masse to the north about 65 BC. As a result of this migration they eventually settled in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Holland, England, and France (Sharon Turner, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, volume II, 19).

According to Esdras, at some point in time the ten tribes divided into two groups. It would appear that the more spiritual elements were quickened sufficiently to be transferred to a location, perhaps the “outmost parts of heaven” referred to by Moses who promised they would also be gathered back in the due time of the Lord. The fragments of the ten tribes who were not taken became dispersed among the nations of the earth. These also must be eventually gathered out from among the nations.

Some LDS authors have spoken directly against the notion that there are descendants of the ten tribes together in a body waiting for the instructions to return. One such author is Joseph Fielding McConkie who refers to such an idea as “another classic Mormon myth.” He teaches that the ten tribes have simply been scattered among the nations of the earth (*Straightforward Answers to Tough Gospel Questions*, [Deseret Book, 1998], 128-31). Brother McConkie argues that the scriptural records the ten tribes will bring with them as they are gathered in the latter days are the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has also argued against the idea that there exists a cohesive group of the ten lost tribes. If the reader is interested in Brother McConkie’s discussion of this topic, see his book *Millennial Messiah* (215-17, 326).

**4 And I command you that ye shall write these sayings after I am gone, that if it so be that my people at Jerusalem, they who have seen me and been with me in my ministry, do not ask the Father in my name, that they may receive a knowledge of you by the Holy Ghost, and also of the other tribes whom they know not of, that these sayings which ye shall write shall be kept and shall be manifested unto the Gentiles, that through the fulness of the Gentiles, the remnant of their seed, who shall be scattered forth upon the face of the earth because of their unbelief, may be brought in, or may be brought to a knowledge of me, their Redeemer.**

**verse 4** The Lord commands that his teachings during this visit to the Nephites be written down and included in the Book of Mormon record. The Lord then proclaims that if the Lord’s apostles in the Old World do not inquire of the Father about the

peoples of scattered Israel and write a record of these scattered Israelites in the New Testament, then the Book of Mormon—“these sayings which ye shall write”—will inform the scattered remnants of the Jews about the peoples of scattered Israel. We have no record that the Old World apostles ever wrote such a record. The Book of Mormon will be distributed to the scattered tribe of Judah by the Gentiles—the inhabitants of the great Gentile nation—the missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thus, the world could, in these last days, be made aware of the scattered remnants of the Lehitites and the lost ten tribes from the Book of Mormon. We are, therefore, indebted to the Book of Mormon for its singular ability to enlarge our comprehension of the Savior’s worldwide mission and personal visits to the various groups of Israel—the Nephites and the lost ten tribes, as well as the Jews.

This dissemination of the Book of Mormon by the great Gentile nation will occur at a time spoken of in the scriptures as the “times of the Gentiles” or the “fulness of the Gentiles” when the “Gentiles” in the great Gentile nation will have and will promulgate the fulness of the gospel (see the commentary for 1 Nephi 15:13). The “times of the Gentiles” will also be a time of universal apostasy and much wickedness. The “fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles” will be shortly before the Lord’s second coming when the gospel has been preached in all of the gentile nations of the earth and the people in those nations have had the opportunity to accept or reject the gospel message. This time will be followed by a brief period when the gospel will be preached to the Jews (D&C 45:51-53).

**5 And then will I gather them in from the four quarters of the earth; and then will I fulfil the covenant which the Father hath made unto all the people of the house of Israel.**

**verses 5** In verse 4 the Lord seems to refer to the latter-day gathering of the tribe of Judah. In verse 5 he generalizes and refers to the gathering of all the scattered remnants of the house of Israel. For a review of the concept of the gathering of Israel, see the introductory commentary for 1 Nephi 20.

**6 And blessed are the Gentiles, because of their belief in me, in and of the Holy Ghost, which witnesses unto them of me and of the Father.**

**verse 6** Keep in mind that in general, in the Book of Mormon, the word *Gentiles* refers, in some measure, to all peoples other than Jews. Likewise, in the following verse, the phrase “house of Israel” refers, to some extent, to the Jews.

**7 Behold, because of their belief in me, saith the Father, and because of the unbelief of you, O house of Israel, in the latter day shall the truth come unto the Gentiles, that the fulness of these things shall be made known unto them.**

**verses 6-7** The Lord commends the saints of his latter-day Church—the Gentiles. The fulness of the gospel will be made known unto them.

**8** But wo, saith the Father, unto the unbelieving of the Gentiles—for notwithstanding they have come forth upon the face of this land, and have scattered my people who are of the house of Israel; and my people who are of the house of Israel have been cast out from among them, and have been trodden under feet by them;

**9** And because of the mercies of the Father unto the Gentiles, and also the judgments of the Father upon my people who are of the house of Israel, verily, verily, I say unto you, that after all this, and I have caused my people who are of the house of Israel to be smitten, and to be afflicted, and to be slain, and to be cast out from among them, and to become hated by them, and to become a hiss and a byword among them—

**verses 8-9** The Lord sounds an ominous warning to those among the latter-day Gentiles in the United States of America who are unrighteous or “unbelieving.” The Father has been merciful unto them “notwithstanding” their unrighteousness. Because of the Father’s judgments against Israel, these unrighteous Gentiles have been allowed to smite and afflict the remnants of the house of Israel, including the Native Indians, particularly of Central America, and perhaps to some extent the Jews. Implicit in this verse is the fact that the unrighteousness among the latter-day Gentiles will not be long tolerated.

**10** And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.

**verse 10** The resurrected Christ follows the Father’s command to proclaim to the Nephites, so that they can write his words into the Book of Mormon record, a warning to the latter-day Gentiles. In the latter days, some of the Gentiles—very possibly inhabitants of the United States of America—will be lifted up in pride above all other nations of the world and will be guilty of many forms of sin and abominations. Unless these latter-day Gentiles repent, the gospel will eventually be taken from among them. This will likely occur after the day of the Gentiles has been fulfilled or completed at the beginning of the Millennium.

**“priestcrafts”** For a specific definition of this colorful word, see the commentary for 2 Nephi 10:5.

**11 And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them.**

**12 And I will show unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you; but I will remember my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fulness of my gospel.**

**verses 11-12** During this latter-day period, the Lord will renew his covenants with the house of Israel which has been gathered. The reader should again be reminded that in the latter days, the more righteous among the “Gentiles”—those to whom the gospel has been restored—are actually descendants of the tribes of Israel. Likely, many of the latter-day Gentiles who reject the gospel are not lineal descendants of Israel.

**13 But if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel.**

**verse 13 “if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me”** This verse suggests that some of the latter-day Gentiles whom the Lord is warning are members of the Lord’s Church, or at least were once members of the Church—particularly the phrase “repent and return to me.” In D&C 112:24-26, we read: “Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord. And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord; First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord” (D&C 112:24-26).

**14 And I will not suffer my people, who are of the house of Israel, to go through among them, and tread them down, saith the Father.**

**verse 14** Initially the wicked Gentiles of the latter days will be mercifully protected by the Lord, in spite of their sinful ways. The Lord will, for a time, prevent his people, the house of Israel, from doing them harm. In the following verse, however, we will learn that eventually the house of Israel will gain a victory over the apostate Gentiles.

**15 But if they will not turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, I will suffer them, yea, I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down, and they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor,**

**which is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of my people, O house of Israel.**

**verse 15** “I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down” This interesting statement by the Lord is a recurring theme in the Savior’s teachings among the Nephites (see also 3 Nephi 20:16; 21:12; Mormon 5:24). It has engendered considerable discussion as to its meaning. Some have suggested that it prophesies of a major “Lamanite” uprising against the people of the United States. It seems more likely that this sentence describes a happening to occur in the latter days, and represents a time when the righteous souls of the house of Israel, will rend their Gentile enemies, like a “young lion among the flocks of sheep” (Micah 5:8-14). This episode will be the culmination of Israel’s ultimate victory over its foes. This victory will come when the Savior returns and the wicked are destroyed.

**“they shall be as a salt that hath lost its savor”** Again, referring to the wicked Gentiles of the latter-days, this phrase provides additional evidence that the Lord’s warning includes Church members. A modern revelation clearly indicates that it is only those who have received the covenant gospel who can become the salt of the earth: “When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant, they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men; They are called to be the savor of men; therefore, if that salt of the earth lose its savor, behold, it is thenceforth good for nothing only to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men” (D&C 101:39-40).

Again, it should be noted that those Gentiles outside the lineage of Israel who join with the Church of Jesus Christ and remain faithful are adopted into the house of Israel and become the people of the Lord.

There is a lesson to be learned here. Blessings once offered become cursings if they are rejected. The Gentiles will be given great opportunity, but if they “sin against” the gospel and treat it lightly, they will lose it and have to bear the consequences.

**16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, thus hath the Father commanded me—that I should give unto this people this land for their inheritance.**

**verse 16** The United States of America is the promised land for the scattered ten tribes of Israel, especially the tribe of Jacob (see also the commentary for 2 Nephi 1:5).

**17 And then the words of the prophet Isaiah shall be fulfilled, which say:**

**verses 18-20** The Lord quotes Isaiah 52:8-10 which will be fulfilled after the Lord appears in glory, cleanses the earth, gathers his people from the four quarters of the

earth, and establishes Zion, a society of the pure in heart. Then all shall see the salvation of God. And then the earth shall rest (see Moses 7:60- 64).

**18 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing, for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion.**

**verse 18 “thy watchmen”** It was traditional in Palestine to place watchers or guards on the walls of the cities to observe those who approached.

**“thy watchmen shall lift up their voice”** Symbolically, the watchmen are priesthood leaders who keep watch over the Church and call out the good news of redemption.

**“with the voice together shall they sing [a new millennial song entitled] when the Lord shall bring again Zion”** The words of this song are given by the Lord in D&C 84:99-102:

**The Lord hath brought again Zion;  
The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel,  
According to the election of grace,  
Which was brought to pass by the faith  
And covenant of their fathers.  
The Lord hath redeemed his people;  
And Satan is bound and time is no longer.  
The Lord hath gathered all things in one.  
The Lord hath brought down Zion from above.  
The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath.  
The earth hath travailed and brought forth her strength;  
And truth is established in her bowels;  
And the heavens have smiled upon her;  
And she is clothed with the glory of her God;  
For he stands in the midst of his people.  
Glory, and honor, and power, and might,  
Be ascribed to our God; for he is full of mercy,  
Justice, grace and truth, and peace,  
Forever and ever, Amen.**

**“they shall see eye to eye”** Unity is one of the key characteristics of Zion. Moses recorded: “The Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18). Joseph Smith said, “What if all the world should embrace this gospel? They would then see eye to eye, and the blessings of God would be poured out upon the people, which is the desire of my whole soul (*HC*, 5:259).

Alvin C. Rencher shared a story that illustrates the value of working together:

A horse-pulling contest in Canada illustrates the effect of synergism especially well. The people put weights on a flat bed wagon, and a single horse pulled it a measured distance. They added 1,000 pounds at a time, until the horse could no longer pull it. The winner pulled 9,000 pounds, and the runner-up pulled 8,000 pounds. Out of curiosity, someone suggested putting those two horses together. When they hitched both horses to the wagon, they pulled 31,000 pounds. Working together the horses pulled more than three times the weight the best of them could pull alone (“Unity Through the Power of Charity,” in *The Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi Through Moroni, From Zion to Destruction*, 266).

**19 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.**

**verse 19 “Break forth into joy, sing together”** All the righteous will join in chorus.

**“ye waste places of Jerusalem”** This expression refers to the ancient ruins of Jerusalem about to come alive again as Israel gathers there.

**“for the Lord hath comforted his people”** The comfort comes in the form of redemption and a restoration to the Lord’s promises.

**“he hath redeemed Jerusalem”** Jerusalem will be set free from captivity, both physical and spiritual.

**20 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.**

**verse 20 “The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations”** This expression has its origin in the Hebrew practice of throwing back the cloak from his right arm so that it does not produce an impediment in combat. At his second coming, Christ will make bare his arm when he shows forth his power for all to see.

**“in the eyes of all the nations”** All the world will know of his salvation, meaning the victory of our Lord over the forces of evil and corruption. The same idea is then repeated: “and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”



## 3 Nephi Chapter 17

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 17:4** But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them.

**3 Nephi 17:23-24** And he spoke unto the multitude. and said unto them: Behold your little ones. And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.

**1 Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them: Behold, my time is at hand.**

**verse 1** “Behold, my time is at hand” The Savior’s meaning is unclear. Though he certainly knows he is coming back the following day, he almost makes it sound like he’s saying farewell, “My time to leave you is at hand.”

**2 I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time.**

**verse 2** We certainly cannot conclude that these Nephites were unworthy or spiritually unprepared for their experience with the Savior. They had survived the great destruction, and they were mature in their righteousness. Yet the Lord perceived in them a weakness that was making it difficult for them to understand all his words. The Lord had been teaching of the gathering. The Nephites’ difficulty in understanding the gathering seems to have had more to do with their lack of intellectual understanding of the doctrine itself. Each of us is reminded that the gospel contains doctrines that require study, pondering, and prayer.

**3 Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.**

**verse 3** “ponder upon the things which I have said” Here is a reminder that the things of God are not understood through hearing or reading alone. The Spirit must also bear witness which often occurs during a time of meditation, prayer, and pondering.

“ask of the Father, in my name” During Christ’s three-day post resurrection visit with the Nephites, he explicitly commanded them, on eight occasions, to pray to the Father in his name (see also 3 Nephi 18:19, 21, 23, 30; 20:31; 27:28; 28:30).

**verses 2-3** Obviously the Nephites there gathered had had a profound experience which they did not, as yet, fully understand. Only through continued obedience and prayerful contemplation would they come to fully comprehend its deep significance.

**4 But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them.**

**verse 4 “I go unto the Father”** Again, Jesus almost makes it sound like he is leaving them for good, though we know that he will return the following day. We are not told why he is returning to the Father. Hugh Nibley even suggested that perhaps the Savior was planning to leave at this point and then changed his mind (*Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, lecture 96, 3 Nephi 11-19).

**“also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel”** See the commentary for 3 Nephi 16:1-3.

**5 And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.**

**6 And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.**

**verse 6** After asking the multitude to return to their homes, the Nephites did not, in fact return home. Rather they tarried. At this, the Savior was touched and seems to have changed his plans temporarily. Paul wrote: “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15).

Keep in mind that his empathy for human suffering was immediate and personal and based at least in part on his sufferings in Gethsemane and on the cross. There was nothing theoretical or speculative about his compassion for these Nephites or for us: “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11-12).

**7 Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy.**

**verse 7** Christ's healing of the sick among the Nephites was an act of great compassion and love and was undoubtedly provided to the Nephites as a reward for their faith. More importantly, however, perhaps we ought to see in his physical healing a symbolic representation of the spiritual healing which he offers.

"Halt" means lame—that is, holding or stopping in walking.

**"or leprous"** There is little evidence that leprosy existed in ancient Mesoamerica. It seems likely that the term "leprous" here might refer to any number of serious skin diseases (John L. Sorenson, FARMS Update, September 1994, number 26).

**8 For I perceive that ye desire that I should show unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem, for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you.**

**9 And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him.**

**10 And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him; and as many as could come for the multitude did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears.**

**verse 10** Elder Bruce R. McConkie declared:

To worship the Lord is to follow after him, to seek his face, to believe his doctrine, and to think his thoughts. To worship the Lord is to put first in our lives the things of his kingdom, to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God, to center our whole hearts upon Christ and that salvation which comes because of him. It is to walk in the light as he is in the light, to do the things that he wants done, to do what he would do under similar circumstances, to be as he is. To worship the Lord is to walk in the Spirit, to rise above the carnal things, to bridle our passions, and to overcome the world (*Doctrines of the Restoration*, 371).

**11 And it came to pass that he commanded that their little children should be brought.**

**12 So they brought their little children and set them down upon the ground round about him, and Jesus stood in the midst; and the multitude gave way till they had all been brought unto him.**

**13 And it came to pass that when they had all been brought, and Jesus stood in the midst, he commanded the multitude that they should kneel down upon the ground.**

**verse 13** Imagine this poignant scene—Jesus standing in the midst of a large group of children with their parents kneeling around them.

Apparently the posture which we assume as we pray is important (see also 3 Nephi 19:6, 16-17). During private formal prayers, individuals should both bow and kneel down before God. Such a posture evidences humility, submission, and meekness. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has explained that “our Father is glorified and exalted; he is an omnipotent being. We are as the dust of the earth in comparison, and yet we are his children with access, through prayer, to his presence. . . . Almost by instinct, therefore, we do such things as bow our heads and close our eyes; fold our arms, or kneel, or fall on our faces” (“Why the Lord Ordained Prayer,” *Ensign* [January 1976] 6:12).

**14 And it came to pass that when they had knelt upon the ground, Jesus groaned within himself, and said: Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel.**

**verse 14** It is notable that in the midst of all this joy, Jesus’s thoughts turned to his people, to the house of Israel much of which was apostate. Perhaps on experiencing the joy of these Nephites, his heart turned to those who were missing this type of joy. Perhaps he thus experienced remorse which caused him to groan.

**15 And when he had said these words, he himself also knelt upon the earth; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him.**

**verses 16-17** In these following verses, Mormon momentarily digresses from his account and quotes from the records written by those fortunate Nephites who were eye-witnesses of these great events.

**16 And after this manner do they bear record: The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father;**

**17 And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father.**

**18 And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome.**

**19 And it came to pass that Jesus spake unto them, and bade them arise.**

**20 And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them: Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.**

**verse 20** What a remarkable gift these faithful Nephites had given to the Savior of the world! They were so humble and responsive that he, the Man of Sorrows who had wept so often for the sins of the world, could now weep because his joy was full.

**21 And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.**

**22 And when he had done this he wept again;**

**23 And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.**

**verses 23 “Behold your little ones”** Is Jesus simply inviting the parents to look at their children and admire them? Or is more implied here? It has been suggested that perhaps the children now belonged to their parents in a way that they had not belonged before. Perhaps they had been sealed to them for eternity (John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount*, [Copublished by FARMS: Provo, Utah and Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, Utah], 98-99).

**24 And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.**

**verse 24 “they were encircled about by fire”** For a discussion of the possible significance of this remarkable event, see the commentary for 3 Nephi 19:13-14. It is likely that this encircling about by fire was a sign of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Compare this experience with that of Nephi and Lehi in Helaman 5:23-49 or with that of the saints on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

**25 And the multitude did see and hear and bear record; and they know that their record is true for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself; and they were in number about two thousand and five hundred souls; and they did consist of men, women, and children.**

**verse 25 “the multitude did see and hear”** The “multitudes” of Book of Mormon peoples are inevitably smaller groups than we may intuitively envision in our mind’s eye. Here, for example, the “multitude” in Bountiful who received Christ were in number only about 700 families—2,500 people.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 18

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 18:15-16** The Savior to his twelve Nephite disciples: Ye must watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him.

**3 Nephi 18:20** The Savior to the Nephite multitude: Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, it shall be given unto you.

**verses 1-14** The Lord introduces to the Nephites the ordinance of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. This is the ordinance in the new law or new covenant that replaced animal sacrifice. Just as the sacrificial ordinances of the law of Moses were rich with spiritual symbolism, so too is the ordinance of the sacrament symbolic of the Lord's atoning sacrifice. The ordinance of animal sacrifices had looked forward in anticipation of the fulfillment of the atonement, while the sacrament looks back in remembrance of the Lord's suffering.

This new ordinance, which the Lord instituted in both the Old and New Worlds, is much more than simply a method for reminding the saints of the Lord's suffering. It is a time of repenting by covenant of our sins and of all those ways in which we fall short of Jesus Christ's teachings and his life and example. It is a moment when the blessings of Christ's atonement may be extended to us, as we struggle to repent. By this extension of the Savior's atonement, we may be absolved of our sins. The process of repentance is incremental, line upon line, and takes place over a lifetime of sacramental ordinances. We may have the blessings of his atonement extended to us not just once in our lives but repeatedly, over and over, as we strive to repent and make our repentance a matter of covenant at the ordinance of the sacrament. Elder John H. Groberg spoke of the ordinance of the sacrament in general conference. He said:

**Do you remember the feeling you had when you were baptized—that sweet, clean feeling of a pure soul, having been forgiven, washed clean through the merits of the Savior? If we partake of the sacrament worthily, we can feel that way regularly, for we renew that covenant, which includes his forgiveness (CR, April 1989, 50).**

The sacrament is also a time of striving for gifts of the Spirit. These are the myriad incremental characteristics of Christ which we strive for and which we must earn through our diligent obedience in order to progress toward godhood. As we bring our failings and shortcomings and lay them upon the symbolic altar of sacrifice, during the ordinance of the sacrament, we covenant to forsake them as we partake of the emblems of the sacrament. Over time, as the Spirit judges that we are worthy, increments of the light of Christ are planted in our very souls. His characteristics become ours. Referring to the ordinance of the sacrament, Elder Melvin J. Ballard wrote:

I have always looked upon this blessed privilege as the means of spiritual growth, and there is none other quite so fruitful in the achievement of that end as the partaking, worthily, of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. We eat food to stimulate our physical bodies. Without the partaking of food we would become weak and sickly, and fail physically. It is just as necessary, for our spiritual body, that we should partake of this sacrament, and by it obtain spiritual food for our souls. . . . We must come, however, to the sacrament table . . . hungering and thirsting after righteousness, [and] for spiritual growth ("The Sacramental Covenant," *Improvement Era*, October 1919, 1025-31).

For further discussion of the processes of justification, sanctification, and of the ordinance of baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, see *Justification and Sanctification in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17. Also, *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth* also in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18.

The reader should remain alert to the audience the Savior is addressing in this chapter. Often he is instructing his disciples (apostles) alone. At other times he is addressing the multitude.

**1 And it came to pass that Jesus commanded his disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto him.**

**2 And while they were gone for bread and wine, he commanded the multitude that they should sit themselves down upon the earth.**

**3 And when the disciples had come with bread and wine, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the disciples and commanded that they should eat.**

**4 And when they had eaten and were filled, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude.**

**5 And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said unto the disciples: Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name.**

**verse 5** Here is a reminder that the ordinance of the sacrament, like all priesthood ordinances, must be performed by one who is properly authorized.

There are some peculiarities about this sacrament service. First, it is peculiar that the disciples and the multitude had already partaken of the sacramental bread, and yet the Savior says in this verse "there shall one be ordained among you, and *to him will I give power* that he shall break bread and bless it (italics added)." In other words, he had not yet given the authority to any Nephite to administer the sacrament. There are some additional peculiarities about this particular sacramental meal. The purpose of the sacrament is the renewal of the covenant of baptism, and, as yet, neither the twelve disciples or the multitude had been baptized. The multitude will have to wait until after



the Savior's three-day ministry before they are baptized. The twelve will be baptized between his first and second visits. Also notice that all who partook of the sacramental bread (the disciples in verse 4 and the multitude in verse 5) ate bread until they "were filled." That is, they made a meal of the bread. This was also apparently the case with the sacramental wine (see verse 9). While we might suppose that these verses imply that they were "filled" with the Spirit, it seems like they did not need this meal to fill them with the Spirit of God, given the wondrous happenings of that day. Yet another similar sacramental service will occur on the day following this one (3 Nephi 20:3-9). During this one on the following day, the Savior will miraculously provide the bread and wine. It is also thus likely that on the morrow the multitude will eat until they "are filled," though the account in 3 Nephi 20 does not specifically say so.

Because of these considerations, it has been suggested that these two meals of bread and wine were more than simply sacramental services. It has been suggested that these two sacramental meals were also, in the traditions of Israel, "covenant meals" after the pattern of the one recorded in Exodus 24 where Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy princes or elders of Israel went up on the side of Sinai and there saw God and "did eat and drink" (Exodus 24:11). This Old Testament text is almost universally understood as referring to the eating of a covenant meal by the representatives of Israel in the presence of God on the Holy Mountain. The idea of two parties eating and drinking together to formally ratify a covenant is common to both the Bible and the customs of the ancient Near East. To eat together was to be bound by mutual obligation. Such a meal functions as a seal of the alliance between two groups or families. Certainly in this tradition, it was appropriate that these two sacramental services in 3 Nephi 18 and in 3 Nephi 20 be "covenant meals." The place of the meals was the temple. Both meals are in the presence of the God of Israel. The occasion is the introduction of a new gospel dispensation. Symbolically, both represent a ratifying seal of the covenant they have entered into.

After the Lord's three-day ministry it appears that the more traditional sacrament observance became the order of the day. We read that Christ continued to appear on many occasions to break bread and bless it for them (see 3 Nephi 26:13).

**6 And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you.**

**7 And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.**

**verse 7** I have mentioned previously that the word "remember," when used in scripture, has a far richer meaning than simply calling to mind. It implies following and doing and obeying.

The five essential elements of the sacrament prayers are:

1. We covenant to be obedient, to obey the commandments.
2. We covenant to take his name upon us and to maintain that name written in our hearts.
3. We partake of the emblems in remembrance of his body and blood.
4. We partake as a witness to the Father that we remember the Son.
5. He promises that we will have his Spirit to be with us.

Note that here and in verses 10 and 11, all of these elements are mentioned by the Savior himself. The reader may wish also to review Mosiah 5:5-12 where some of these elements are also found.

**8 And it came to pass that when he said these words, he commanded his disciples that they should take of the wine of the cup and drink of it, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it.**

**9 And it came to pass that they did so, and did drink of it and were filled; and they gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled.**

**10 And when the disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them: Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you.**

**11 And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.**

**12 And I give unto you a commandment that ye shall do these things. And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock.**

**verse 12 “for ye are built upon my rock”** Elder Melvin J. Ballard provided us with an interesting insight:

No man goes away from this Church and becomes an apostate in a week, nor in a month. It is a slow process. The one thing that would make for the safety of every man and woman would be to appear at the sacrament table every Sabbath day. We would not get very far away in a week—not so far away that, by the process of self-investigation, we could not rectify the wrongs we may have done. If we should refrain from partaking of the sacrament, condemned by ourselves as unworthy to receive these emblems, we could not endure that long, and we would soon, I am sure, have the spirit of repentance. The road to the sacrament table is the path of safety for Latter-day saints (“The Sacramental Covenant,” *Improvement Era*, October 1919, 1025-31).

**13 But whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the**

floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall, and the gates of hell are ready open to receive them.

**14 Therefore blessed are ye if ye shall keep my commandments, which the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you.**

**verse 14 “blessed are ye”** The standard word order for clauses in contemporary English is subject-verb-object/complement (S-V-O/C). By this convention, this phrase would be rendered “Ye are blessed.” The technical term for this word order variation is anastrophe. The change is made for rhetorical effect—for meter or style. Other examples include “a written word sent he” (O/C-V-S) in Mosiah 29:4 and “this they have done” (O/C-S-V) in Alma 60:9. This type of word variation is found in many classical literary texts.

**verses 15-21** Jesus now turns his attention to teaching of the importance of prayer. In verses 15-16 he addresses his disciples.

**15 Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him.**

**verse 15** To avoid being tempted beyond our capacity to resist, a deliberate watching is vital in addition to regularly praying. It is not reasonable to pray for strength to resist temptation and then recklessly flirt with evil.

**16 And as I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church, among my people who do repent and are baptized in my name. Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you.**

**verse 16** As we have discussed previously, Jesus is our “light” on two levels. First he is our example, our exemplar: “For the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do” (3 Nephi 27:21). Second, he emanates the light of Christ which gives life to all things and which, if we are worthy to partake, enables us to become like him. For further discussion of the light of Christ, see *The Concept of Light* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

**17 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto his disciples, he turned again unto the multitude and said unto them:**

**verse 17** Jesus now turns his attention to the multitude and repeats some of the instruction he has just given to his disciples.

**18 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.**

**19 Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name;**

**20 And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you.**

**verse 20** Again we are reminded that we will inevitably obtain everything we ask for in prayer. But there is a condition. We must be sufficiently in tune with the Spirit, that we only ask for that “which is right”—that which the Lord desires for us (see Moroni 7:26).

We will learn that to selected individuals—to Nephi the son of Helaman (Helaman 10:4-7) and to his Nephite disciples or apostles (3 Nephi 27:28-29)—the Lord will make this same promise, but he will do so without any qualification. This unqualified promise, we will learn, is a part of the sealing power (see the commentary for these scriptural passages).

**21 Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.**

**verse 21** President Gordon B. Hinckley observed: “I feel satisfied that there is no adequate substitute for the morning and evening practice of kneeling together—father, mother, and children” (“The Blessings of Family Prayer,” *Ensign*, February 1991, 2-5).

**22 And behold, ye shall meet together oft; and ye shall not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together, but suffer them that they may come unto you and forbid them not;**

**verse 22** Meet together often in congregations to teach one another, and extend the hand of fellowship to whoever would wish to meet with you. Herein is the spirit of fellowship and love that ought to exist in every ward unit in the Lord’s Church.

**23 But ye shall pray for them, and shall not cast them out; and if it so be that they come unto you oft ye shall pray for them unto the Father, in my name.**

**24 Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do. Behold ye see that I have prayed unto the Father, and ye all have witnessed.**

**verse 24** For many of our fellow mortals upon the earth, the only example of Jesus Christ and the fulness of his gospel which they may see is *our* example. Both individually and as a Church we must hold forth the example of the Savior. Again, on another level we may actually develop the ability to radiate light to other beings on the earth, and thus communicate spirit to spirit, as we partake of the light of Christ. Again, see *The Concept of Light in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

**25 And ye see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me, that ye might feel and see; even so shall ye do unto the world; and whosoever breaketh this commandment suffereth himself to be led into temptation.**

**verse 25 “I have commanded that none of you should go away”** Here the Savior extends his counsel that we should invite all to participate with us in the fellowship of the saints. Just as he has so commanded us, he emphasizes that he extends the hand of fellowship with him to all men—excluding no one.

**“that ye might feel and see”** The Savior had offered the Nephites the opportunity to have an intimate physical engagement with him when he invited them to come forth and “feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel” (3 Nephi 11:14). He is so anxious for the salvation of us all that he seems to want each of us to have that same physical relationship with him (see D&C 6:34-37). It has been suggested that his sacrament, wherein we partake of the representation of his body and blood, provides us that opportunity. He desires us to come unto him both physically and spiritually and “partake of his salvation” (Omni 1:26).

**“whosoever breaketh this commandment suffereth himself to be led into temptation”** It is not entirely clear from the text which commandment is being referred to here. It could be his command to extend the hand of fellowship to all in the gatherings of the saints, or it could be his command to “come unto me” and hold up thy light to the world.

**26 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he turned his eyes again upon the disciples whom he had chosen, and said unto them:**

**verse 26** Jesus again turns his attention back to the disciples (apostles) and provides them with valuable instruction.

**27 Behold verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you another commandment, and then I must go unto my Father that I may fulfil other commandments which he hath given me.**

**28 And now behold, this is the commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it;**

**29 For whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul; therefore if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink of my flesh and blood ye shall forbid him.**

**verses 28-29** It is not the prerogative of any member of the congregation to forbid an individual to partake of the sacrament because of personal unworthiness. This is solely the responsibility of the “judges in Israel”—here the Lord is speaking only to his apostles.

Is an individual actually harmed spiritually from partaking of the sacrament unworthily? Or, does he simply fail to derive any spiritual benefit? This verse seems to imply that it would be better that he not partake of it if he does so unworthily. Just why is such a man drinking “damnation to his soul”? The ordinance of the sacrament is a catalyst for personal repentance and spiritual improvement. We may certainly conclude that any individual who partakes of the sacrament without any desire to repent or improve spiritually will not benefit from partaking. But to be *damned* is more than merely being *dammed* or stopped. Such an individual is “damned,” guilty of sin, and condemned. Recall that the sacrament is a covenantal ordinance which requires that the individual participating in the ordinance of the sacrament enter into covenants with the Lord. Any covenant promises great spiritual blessings to him who keeps his end of the bargain. However, for any covenant there is a penalty affixed. And if the covenant maker fails to live up to his covenants, it would be better for him had he not made the covenant in the first place (see the discussion of covenants in *Covenants and Covenant Making* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 3; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

**30 Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out from among you, but ye shall minister unto him and shall pray for him unto the Father, in my name; and if it so be that he repenteth and is baptized in my name, then shall ye receive him, and shall minister unto him of my flesh and blood.**

**31 But if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people, for behold I know my sheep, and they are numbered.**

**verse 31 “he shall not be numbered among my people”** Any intransigent transgressor who poses any threat to the Church, either spiritual or physical, should be cast out or excommunicated. Church discipline is not only intended to help the sinner repent and return to the Lord, but also is a means of protecting members and safeguarding the integrity and spiritual values of the Church. For additional discussion of the principle of discipline within the church, see the commentary for Mosiah 26:6, 29-30.

**32 Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out of your synagogues, or your places of worship, for unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.**

**verse 32** The priesthood leader has an obligation to continue to work with those who have been excommunicated or subjected to any other form of church discipline.

**33 Therefore, keep these sayings which I have commanded you that ye come not under condemnation; for wo unto him whom the Father condemneth.**

**34 And I give you these commandments because of the disputations which have been among you. And blessed are ye if ye have no disputations among you.**

**35 And now I go unto the Father, because it is expedient that I should go unto the Father for your sakes.**

**verse 35** Again, we are not told why it is necessary that Jesus go “unto the Father for your sakes.”

**36 And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of these sayings, he touched with his hand the disciples whom he had chosen, one by one, even until he had touched them all, and spake unto them as he touched them.**

**37 And the multitude heard not the words which he spake, therefore they did not bear record; but the disciples bare record that he gave them power to give the Holy Ghost. And I will show unto you hereafter that this record is true.**

**verses 36-37** Through his touching his twelve disciples, he bestowed upon them the power to confer upon others the gift of the Holy Ghost. His touching is obviously some form of laying on of hands by which he authorized his apostles to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Just what exactly is the gift of the Holy Ghost? We know that the Holy Ghost prompts those outside the Church—those who have not received the gift of the Holy Ghost (see 1 Nephi 13:12). The usual answer given among the saints is that the gift of the Holy Ghost entitles a member of the Church to the “constant companionship” of the Holy Ghost. It certainly may be true that the Church member who is allowed to partake of the light of Christ may be entitled to a greater quantity of that light because he possesses the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is also likely that receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, the “baptism of the Spirit” by one having proper authority, actually authorizes the receiver to participate in the “baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost,” which is the ordinance by which an individual progresses spiritually and becomes sanctified. For further discussion of these points, see “What is the Gift of the Holy Ghost?” in *The Concept of Light in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15 and *Baptism, the Ordinance that Bring Spiritual Growth in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18.

**38 And it came to pass that when Jesus had touched them all, there came a cloud and overshadowed the multitude that they could not see Jesus.**

**39 And while they were overshadowed he departed from them, and ascended into heaven. And the disciples saw and did bear record that he ascended again into heaven.**

Thus ended the first day. It had been a day never to be forgotten!



## 3 Nephi Chapter 19

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 19:33-34** And the multitude did hear and do bear record; and their hearts were open and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed. Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man.

**1** And now it came to pass that when Jesus had ascended into heaven, the multitude did disperse, and every man did take his wife and his children and did return to his own home.

**2** And it was noised abroad among the people immediately, before it was yet dark, that the multitude had seen Jesus, and that he had ministered unto them, and that he would also show himself on the morrow unto the multitude.

**3** Yea, and even all the night it was noised abroad concerning Jesus; and insomuch did they send forth unto the people that there were many, yea, an exceedingly great number, did labor exceedingly all that night, that they might be on the morrow in the place where Jesus should show himself unto the multitude.

**verses 2-3** Those who had witnessed Jesus's first day of teaching got no sleep that night, as there was much excited talk—spreading the word that Jesus would visit again the following day.

*Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language* defines *noised* as, "Spread by report; much talk of."

**4** And it came to pass that on the morrow, when the multitude was gathered together, behold, Nephi and his brother whom he had raised from the dead, whose name was Timothy, and also his son, whose name was Jonas, and also Mathoni, and Mathonihah, his brother, and Kumen, and Kumenonhi, and Jeremiah, and Shemnon, and Jonas, and Zedekiah, and Isaiah—now these were the names of the disciples whom Jesus had chosen—and it came to pass that they went forth and stood in the midst of the multitude.

**verse 4 "Kumen"** President Harold B. Lee reported:

At the Guatemala conference President Elberto Mosso Amodo, president of the Central District, told an interesting experience. He had found in northern Guatemala a city by the name of Kumen. He wondered at the origin of this name since most of the names were of Spanish or Indian origin, but not so with the name Kumen. When he read the Book of Mormon, to his delight, he found that one of the twelve disciples called by the Master when he visited the Western Hemisphere was called Kumen.

Undoubtedly, the city was named for that disciple who most likely had frequented this place (“Mexico and Central America Area” *General Conference Report*, 1972, 118).

Undoubtedly many more than the first day’s 2,500 Nephites were present on the second day of Jesus’s Nephite ministry.

“**Mathoni**” “**Mathonihah**” For commentary on the derivations of these names, see the supplemental article, *Names in the Book of Mormon*.

**5 And behold, the multitude was so great that they did cause that they should be separated into twelve bodies.**

**verse 5** Although the text offers no explanation of this division into twelve groups, it is likely that they were so organized to allow each member of the twelve to preside over and teach a group so that each person present could hear and understand.

**6 And the twelve did teach the multitude; and behold, they did cause that the multitude should kneel down upon the face of the earth, and should pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus.**

**verse 6** It is notable that the twelve did not have to be commanded to begin teaching the people. They instinctively assumed that responsibility. They taught the same things which they had heard Jesus teach the day before.

**7 And the disciples did pray unto the Father also in the name of Jesus. And it came to pass that they arose and ministered unto the people.**

**8 And when they had ministered those same words which Jesus had spoken—nothing varying from the words which Jesus had spoken—behold, they knelt again and prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus.**

**verse 8** It is presumed the Nephite apostles taught the multitude, concentrating on those who had not been present for the Savior’s appearance on the previous day. They taught, of course, the things they had heard Jesus teach.

**9 And they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.**

**verse 9** We can pray for nothing more important than the companionship of the Holy Ghost. President Heber J. Grant promised that “if we earnestly and honestly seek the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, I can assure you that we will receive it” (*Gospel Standards*. Compiled by G. Homer Durham. Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1969, 26).

Praying to receive the Holy Ghost and praying by the power of the Holy Ghost are two different things. Without the power or guidance of the Holy Ghost, “we know not what we should pray for as we ought” (Romans 8:26). The Holy Ghost will actually provide whoever is praying with precise particulars of what to pray for. Such was the

state of the Nephite multitude who, while praying, “did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire” (3 Nephi 19:24). When we utter the things that God wants us to utter, then we are asking “in the Spirit,” which is akin to asking “according to the will of God.” When this occurs, our prayers will be answered, even as we ask (see D&C 46:30). Having the Holy Ghost dictate God’s will concerning us should be the goal of all Latter-day Saints, knowing that “the time will come when we shall know the will of God before we ask. Then everything for which we pray will be right” (Marion G. Romney, *Learning for the Eternities*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977, 117–18).

**10 And when they had thus prayed they went down unto the water’s edge, and the multitude followed them.**

**11 And it came to pass that Nephi went down into the water and was baptized.**

**12 And he came up out of the water and began to baptize. And he baptized all those whom Jesus had chosen.**

**verses 11-12** Why did Nephi and the other disciples need to be baptized? Had they not already been baptized? President Joseph Fielding Smith has explained:

Before the organization of the Church [in this final dispensation] a few others, besides Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, had been baptized including each of the six other members of the organization. On the day of the organization, and after the vote had been taken all of those who had been baptized were baptized again. Why this was done has caused some needless discussion by members of the Church and ridicule by its enemies. However this act was consistent. The first baptism was, it is true, for the remission of sins, but baptism is of a dual nature; not only is it for the remission of sins, but it is also the doorway into the church, or the kingdom of God (John 3: 3-5). Therefore by command of the Lord all those who had been baptized before the 6th day of April, 1830, were baptized again. We have a like situation among the Nephites and Lamanites, when our Redeemer appeared to them. Before that day they were subject to the law of Moses, although they had practiced baptism from the beginning for the remission of sins (D&C 84:23-27). And baptism was the entrance into the Church as it was established among them at that time, yet the Savior commanded Nephi, son of Nephi, to be baptized and to baptize the other disciples whom he had chosen and then the people, although Nephi and the disciples had previously been baptized (3 Nephi 7:15-26; 19:10-14) (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, volume 1, 93).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie added:

When the Church and kingdom is fully organized and operative, one baptism suffices for any one person. There is no need for and no ordinance of rebaptism in the Church. Excommunicated persons must of course be baptized a second time if they are to be restored to fellowship in the kingdom. If there were no record or proof that a person had been baptized, it would be necessary to perform the ordinance over again.

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were, of course, baptized for the remission of sins on May 15, 1829 (JS-H 1:66-75), and were baptized again for admission to the Church on April 6, 1830 (HC, 1:75-78). Their first baptism could not admit them to membership in an organization which did not exist at the time the ordinance was performed. A similar situation once prevailed among the Nephites (3 Nephi 7:18-26; 19:7-15). Many of the saints in this dispensation were baptized a second time after they arrived in the Salt Lake Valley (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:332-337) (“Baptism,” *Mormon Doctrine*, 70).

**13 And it came to pass when they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire.**

**14 And behold, they were encircled about as if it were by fire; and it came down from heaven, and the multitude did witness it, and did bear record; and angels did come down out of heaven and did minister unto them.**

**verses 13-14 “they were encircled about as if it were by fire”** Let us review some basic principles. In order to have a chance at exaltation, it is necessary to experience the complete or total ordinance of baptism. This complete ordinance consists of three parts:

1. the baptism of water,
2. the baptism of the Spirit—the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost by one having authority), and
3. the “baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.” This expression refers to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. Sanctification occurs immediately following justification—the forgiveness of the particular sin the individual is striving to overcome. Sanctification itself consists of two separate phenomena:

- a. The first is the purging out of a man’s soul “as if by fire” an increment of the natural self the individual is currently striving to overcome through his persistent obedience. By the Spirit’s influence the iniquity, carnality, sensuality, and every other evil thing can be “burned out” of the repentant soul as if by fire.

- b. The second is granting of an increment of an attribute of Christ (gift of the Spirit) the individual is currently striving to earn through his obedience.

In other words, according to the principle of the “baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost,” the person receives a remission of his sins—a removal of the penalty of sin, a burning away of an increment of his natural self, and an increment of a gift of the Spirit. The person who has been thus cleansed becomes a “new creature” of the Holy Ghost. It may be said of him that he is “born again.” As the Holy Ghost carries out this justifying and sanctifying function, it is often said in scripture that he is applying the “atoning blood of Christ.” It may also be said that the Spirit “cleanses their garments by the atoning blood of Christ” or “makes white their garments by the atoning blood of Christ.” Those who would receive this justification and sanctification must, of course, be

sincerely repentant. Please don't fail to review the verse commentary for Mosiah 14:11 on the important concept of justification.

Sanctification is an ongoing process. It is the receiving, line upon line, precept upon precept of those gifts of the Spirit—those incremental attributes of the Father and the Son—by personal revelation after we have strived to obey the Lord's commands. It is also the inevitable cleansing of a man's soul that is associated with receiving gifts of the Spirit. Complete sanctification does not occur at once. Along the progressive road to sanctification, however, there is apparently a plateau or a milestone which may be achieved by persistent conformity to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. This landmark achievement may be referred to as reaching "a state of grace" or a state of saintliness, or simply "a state of sanctification." Such a person is said to be "perfect in Christ" or "holy and without spot" or "sanctified in Christ by the grace of God." Is this sanctified state identical to that achieved by the individual who qualifies to have his calling and election made sure? Perhaps it is. Though it is apparently possible to fall from this state of grace (see D&C 20:32-34), it is a most sublime accomplishment since such a person is "enabled to stand spotless before the judgment bar of Christ (2 Nephi 27:19-21)." Also the person who has attained this state of cleanliness is able to see God and view the things of his kingdom (Ether 4:7). For more thoughts on the processes of justification and sanctification, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*. See also the commentary for Mosiah 3:19 and the introductory commentary for Alma 5.

In a few exceptional instances, as in this particular instance, literal fire has attended the baptism of the Spirit—the giving of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Examples include the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and the occasion of the conversion of some Lamanites (Helaman 5). Also, perhaps with similar significance, during Christ's appearance on the western hemisphere, the children were surrounded by fire as they were taught by angels (3 Nephi 17:23-24).

**15 And it came to pass that while the angels were ministering unto the disciples, behold, Jesus came and stood in the midst and ministered unto them.**

**16 And it came to pass that he spake unto the multitude, and commanded them that they should kneel down again upon the earth, and also that his disciples should kneel down upon the earth.**

**17 And it came to pass that when they had all knelt down upon the earth, he commanded his disciples that they should pray.**

**18 And behold, they began to pray; and they did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God.**

**verse 18** Jesus had previously instructed the Nephites that they should pray unto the Father in his name. Why then are these Nephites praying directly to Jesus? Jesus, in his prayer to the Father, provides the answer in verse 22. "They pray unto me

because I am with them.” It is also possible that the Nephites began praying to Jesus as a natural reaction to, and an acknowledgment of, his glory. He did not stop or correct them.

The Book of Mormon teaches unequivocally that the true saint worships the Father in the name of the Son (2 Nephi 25:16; Jacob 4:5). Accordingly, one is to pray to the Father in the name of Christ (2 Nephi 32:9; 3 Nephi 17:3; 18:20; 19:6; 21:27). As Christ prayed for the Nephites, he taught that as they believe in him they become “one” with him and the Father (3 Nephi 19:23, 29; cf. John 17:20-22).

**verses 19-23** While the multitude is praying, Jesus separates himself from the rest and prayed to the Father on behalf of the Nephite apostles.

**19** And it came to pass that Jesus departed out of the midst of them, and went a little way off from them and bowed himself to the earth, and he said:

**20** Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world.

**21** Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.

**22** Father, thou hast given them the Holy Ghost because they believe in me; and thou seest that they believe in me because thou hearest them, and they pray unto me; and they pray unto me because I am with them.

**verse 22** It is significant that one of the ultimate evidences that God observes of our belief in Deity is that we are seen and heard praying. Disciples of Christ should be seen and heard in prayer.

**23** And now Father, I pray unto thee for them, and also for all those who shall believe on their words, that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one.

**verse 23** For further thoughts on the unity that exists between the Father and the Son, see the commentaries for 3 Nephi 1:14 and 3 Nephi 9:15.

**24** And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus prayed unto the Father, he came unto his disciples, and behold, they did still continue, without ceasing, to pray unto him; and they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire.

**verse 24** “they did not multiply many words” The essential ingredients of prayer are faith and sincere desires of the heart, not eloquence or the length of the prayer.

**“it was given unto them what they should pray”** We have been taught that “the Spirit . . . teacheth a man to pray” (2 Nephi 32:5, 8). The Lord has also taught us in the Doctrine and Covenants that if a man is properly influenced by the Holy Ghost, he is promised to receive whatsoever he asks for in prayer (see D&C 46:30). The reason for this bold promise lies in the fact that such a man is taught the things for which he should pray by the Holy Spirit (see D&C 50:30; 3 Nephi 19:24).

**“they were filled with desire”** The most important motivator toward spiritual progress is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a confidence in the blessings of his atonement. Please don’t ever hear or read the phrase “faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” without reminding yourself that the most basic form of this faith is deliberate obedience to the Lord’s commandments.

**25 And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof.**

**verse 25 “his countenance did smile upon them”** Elder Melvin J. Ballard experienced that divine smile:

As I entered the door, I saw, seated on a raised platform, the most glorious being my eyes have ever beheld or that I ever conceived existed in all the eternal worlds. As I approached to be introduced, he arose and stepped towards me with extended arms, and he smiled as he softly spoke my name. If I shall live to be a million years old, I shall never forget that smile. He took me into his arms and kissed me, pressed me to his bosom, and blessed me, until the marrow of my bones seemed to melt! When he had finished, I knelt at his feet, and, as I bathed them with my tears and kisses, I saw the prints of the nails in the feet of the Redeemer of the world. The feeling that I had in the presence of him who hath all things in his hands, to have his love, his affection, and his blessing was such that if I ever can receive that of which I had but a foretaste, I would give all that I am, all that I ever hope to be, to feel what I then felt (Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Service of Melvin J. Ballard* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949], 155-56).

**“the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus”** The disciples were transfigured, a process that we are not given to fully understand, though we do know that it allows those individuals who are transfigured to withstand the presence of a celestial being without being wholly consumed (D&C 76:118).

**26 And Jesus said unto them: Pray on; nevertheless they did not cease to pray.**



**27 And he turned from them again, and went a little way off and bowed himself to the earth; and he prayed again unto the Father, saying:**

**28 Father, I thank thee that thou hast purified those whom I have chosen, because of their faith, and I pray for them, and also for them who shall believe on their words, that they may be purified in me, through faith on their words, even as they are purified in me.**

**verse 28 “I thank thee that thou hast purified those whom I have chosen”**

The disciples were cleansed from all sin. Their faith in the Savior motivated them to good works and repentance. The Spirit then extended to them the blessing of the Savior’s atonement, and their sins were removed—burned out of them as if by fire—through the cleansing or sanctifying function of the Holy Ghost.

**29 Father, I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, because of their faith, that they may be purified in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one, that I may be glorified in them.**

**verse 29 “for those whom thou hast given me out of the world”** These are,

of course, his disciples. Though like all mortals they are in the world, they are not of the world. Thus they are “out of the world.”

**“that I may be glorified in them”** To be “glorified” is to take on more light, or truth, or intelligence (see *The Concept of Light* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15). There is an important concept here that it would seem we are not given, as yet, to fully understand. How is the Savior “glorified in,” or by, his faithful servants? The Lord Jesus was certainly speaking for himself as well as his Father when he said to Moses: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). It is indeed his “work” to enable and encourage us to progress toward our exaltation. But it is also his “glory,” that is, as we progress we add to his glory or light. The Savior glorified himself and added to the glory or light of his Father by atoning for the sins of mankind (see 3 Nephi 11:11) and enabling men to glorify themselves (see 3 Nephi 19:29; see also Isaiah 53:12; Luke 22:29; and D&C 132:31). Somehow as we progress spiritually, and take upon ourselves more light, we add to the light of the Father and of the Son—they are “glorified in,” or through, us. It would seem that we are not, as yet, given to know the detailed mechanics of that process.

**30 And when Jesus had spoken these words he came again unto his disciples; and behold they did pray steadfastly, without ceasing, unto him; and he did smile upon them again; and behold they were white, even as Jesus.**

**verse 30 “they were white, even as Jesus”** Again, reference is made to

transfiguration of Jesus’s disciples.

**31 And it came to pass that he went again a little way off and prayed unto the Father;**

**verse 31** This is the third time on this second day of his Nephite ministry that the Savior “went . . . a little way off” to pray. Since the words of his first two prayers were recorded into the record, we presume that, like this third prayer, they were uttered within earshot of the multitude.

**32 And tongue cannot speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed.**

**33 And the multitude did hear and do bear record; and their hearts were open and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed.**

**34 Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man.**

**35 And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying he came again to the disciples, and said unto them: So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews; wherefore I could not show unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief.**

**36 Verily I say unto you, there are none of them that have seen so great things as ye have seen; neither have they heard so great things as ye have heard.**

**verses 31-36** See the commentary for 3 Nephi 10:18. Obviously these Book of Mormon people were prepared to hear and accept the Savior’s teachings. As Jesus taught among the Jews in the Old World, he taught in parables as most of the Jews were slow to perceive spiritual things, and he wished not to “cast pearls before swine” (JST Matthew 21:34). Among the Nephites, Jesus used no parables, and he taught them the gospel in direct and plainly spoken words.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 20

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 20** The Lord quotes Isaiah 52.

Jesus is preparing to quote Isaiah 54 (see 3 Nephi 22) which tells of the redemption of the latter-day Zion. In 3 Nephi 20 and 21 he tells them some of the things that will transpire before the events recorded in Isaiah 54. Among them are: (1) The gospel will go forth to the Gentiles (3 Nephi 20:27-28; 21:2). (2) Many will gather to Zion including the Jews (3 Nephi 20:29-31), the Lamanites (3 Nephi 21:4-7), and the dispersed of Israel (3 Nephi 20:13; 21:1, 26-28). (3) The covenant people of the Lord will be restored to the lands of their inheritance (3 Nephi 20:14, 22, 29, 33, 46; 21:26-28).

A careful reading of chapters 20 and 21 suggests a consistent distinction between the whole house of Israel as the Father's people and the people of Judah as Christ's people. Also, in these chapters, be careful to ascertain when the Savior is speaking and when he is quoting the Father.

**1 And it came to pass that he commanded the multitude that they should cease to pray, and also his disciples. And he commanded them that they should not cease to pray in their hearts.**

**2 And he commanded them that they should arise and stand up upon their feet. And they arose up and stood upon their feet.**

**verses 3-9** On this second day of the Savior's ministry among the Nephites there will occur another sacramental meal. It is likely that this meal, like the one on the day prior, was more than simply a sacramental service. It was also a "covenant meal" (see the commentary for 3 Nephi 18:5).

**3 And it came to pass that he brake bread again and blessed it, and gave to the disciples to eat.**

**4 And when they had eaten he commanded them that they should break bread, and give unto the multitude.**

**verse 4** On this occasion, Jesus commands the disciples that they should administer the sacrament to the multitude. This was a sign that the disciples possessed the authority to officiate in the ordinance of the sacrament. Also it implies that the taking of the sacrament is not a one-time ordinance, but rather should be repeated often.

**5 And when they had given unto the multitude he also gave them wine to drink, and commanded them that they should give unto the multitude.**

**6 Now, there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude;**

**verse 6** Apparently the Savior miraculously provided the bread and wine. This episode is therefore a New World counterpart of his feeding of the multitude with the loaves and fishes in the Old World (Matthew 14:19-21).

**7 But he truly gave unto them bread to eat, and also wine to drink.**

**8 And he said unto them: 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.**

**verse 8** The Lord rehearses the symbolism of the sacrament.

**9 Now, when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled with the Spirit; and they did cry out with one voice, and gave glory to Jesus, whom they both saw and heard.**

**verses 10 through 3 Nephi 23:5** These verses comprise what has been called the “Covenant People Discourse.” They also contain the Lord’s teachings regarding the covenants of the Lord with the house of Israel. These teachings are contained in no other scripture. Of particular importance is information regarding the fulfilling of the covenant the Lord made with Israel, the Abrahamic covenant. Recall that the law of Moses—the Old Covenant—was fulfilled at Christ’s atonement and resurrection. But what of the Abrahamic covenant? When will it be fulfilled? Read on!

**10 And it came to pass that when they had all given glory unto Jesus, he said unto them: Behold now I finish the commandment which the Father hath commanded me concerning this people, who are a remnant of the house of Israel.**

**11 Ye remember that I spake unto you, and said that when the words of Isaiah should be fulfilled—behold they are written, ye have them before you, therefore search them—**

**verse 11** The “words of Isaiah” spoken of here are found in Isaiah 52:8-10 and in 3 Nephi 16:18–20. They describe the time when most of Israel, including Judah, has been gathered to its promised lands, and Zion has been established. This is at the beginning of the Millennium.

**“behold they are written, ye have them before you”** These writings of Isaiah are contained on the brass plates of Laban which, of course, are in the possession of the Nephites.

**12 And verily, verily, I say unto you, that when they shall be fulfilled then is the fulfilling of the covenant which the Father hath made unto his people, O house of Israel.**

**verse 12** The time of the fulfillment of the words of Isaiah in 3 Nephi 16:18-20 is mentioned in the commentary for the previous verse. At the time of this fulfillment, the “covenant which the Father hath made unto his people,” the so-called Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled. Let us review these covenants. These covenants were first made between father Abraham and the Lord. Abraham received from the Lord the gospel, baptism, the higher priesthood, and the ordinance of celestial marriage. He agreed to abide by the gospel law and honor his priesthood. The Lord in turn made eternally binding promises to Abraham. They include:

1. Abraham would become the “father of many nations” (Genesis 17:19), and his posterity would be exceedingly numerous—even “as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore (Genesis 17:2; 22:17-18).

2. The posterity of Abraham will be blessed with certain lands as an eternal inheritance. This will include the land of Canaan (Genesis 17:8) extending from the Nile River to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18).

3. Abraham’s posterity would prove to be a blessing to all families of the earth (Genesis 12:3). They would do this by bearing the priesthood and preaching the gospel to them. Thus will every family have the opportunity, through the posterity of Abraham, to enjoy the blessings of the gospel, which include the “blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:9-11).

4. All of these blessings of the gospel and the priesthood would be offered to all of Abraham’s mortal posterity.

These covenants were renewed with Isaac (Genesis 26:1-4, 24) and again with Jacob (Genesis 28; 35:9-13; 48:3-4).

**13 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.**

**verse 13** The gathering of all Israel will not be complete at the beginning of the Millennium, but during the Millennium it will greatly accelerate.

**14 And the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you this land, for your inheritance.**

**verse 14** Again, America is given to the tribe of Joseph and the rest of the scattered ten tribes as their promised land.

**15 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—**

**verse 15** The “Gentiles” receive the blessings of the restored gospel and the blessing of being able to establish themselves in America by displacing those who were already on this land.

**16 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.**

**verse 16** The theme sounded in this verse has been previously discussed. See the commentary for 3 Nephi 16:15. As mentioned previously, it has engendered considerable discussion as to its meaning. Some have suggested that it prophesies of a major “Lamanite” uprising against the people of the United States. It seems more likely that this image of Israel’s rending its Gentile enemies, like a “young lion among the flocks of sheep” (Micah 5:8-14), is symbolic of Israel’s ultimate victory over its foes. This victory will come when the Savior returns and the wicked are destroyed.

**17 Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.**

**verse 17** Israel will ultimately enjoy a great final victory over all non-Israelites. The setting for this is at the beginning of the Millennium.

**verses 18-19** In addition to the image of the ferocious young lion (Micah 5:8), the Savior utilizes two additional metaphors from the prophet Micah, that of the reaper gathering his sheaves to the threshing floor and that of the goring bull (Micah 4:12-13).

**18 And I will gather my people together as a man gathereth his sheaves into the floor.**

**19 For I will make my people with whom the Father hath covenanted, yea, I will make thy horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass. And thou shalt beat in pieces many people; and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. And behold, I am he who doeth it.**

**verse 19** The Lord is referring to the gathered Israelites—to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**“I will make thy horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass”** These are expressions of power and strength which will be extended to gathered Israel.

**“And thou shalt beat in pieces many people”** Israel will subdue the wicked.

**“I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.”** The Savior dedicates the righteousness and accomplishments of his earthly kingdom to the glory of the Father.

**20 And it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that the sword of my justice shall hang over them at that day; and except they repent it shall fall upon them, saith the Father, yea, even upon all the nations of the Gentiles.**

**verse 20** Israel will win a victory over all the unrepentant wicked, and the wicked will be destroyed. In modern revelation the Lord said, “And until that hour there will be foolish virgins among the wise; and at that hour cometh an entire separation of the righteous and the wicked; and in that day will I send mine angels to pluck out the wicked and cast them into unquenchable fire” (D&C 63:54). Also, “For the time speedily cometh that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire” (2 Nephi 30:10).

**21 And it shall come to pass that I will establish my people, O house of Israel.**

**22 And behold, this people will I establish in this land, unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your father Jacob; and it shall be a New Jerusalem. And the powers of heaven shall be in the midst of this people; yea, even I will be in the midst of you.**

**verse 22 “this people will I establish in this land, unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your father Jacob”** Jacob prophesied that Joseph’s branches (Ephraim and Manasseh) would cross the waters to inherit “the utmost bound of the everlasting hills” (Genesis 49:22, 26).

The American Jerusalem or *New Jerusalem* will be established with its center at Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. As mentioned previously, it is the gathering place for the scattered ten tribes, predominantly the tribe of Joseph.

**“And the powers of heaven shall be in the midst of this people; yea, even I will be in the midst of you”** After the Lord’s glorious return to earth, the powers of heaven shall indeed come down among those celestial and terrestrial persons who remain after the earth is cleansed. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth. The condition of the earth and all things upon it will be lifted spiritually to a higher plane—to a paradisiacal or terrestrial glory which existed in the days of the Garden of Eden. Jesus will reign personally on the earth and will govern the earth. More specifically, “Christ and the resurrected saints will reign over the earth during the thousand years. They will likely not dwell upon the earth, but will visit it when they please, or when it is necessary to govern it” (*TPJS*, 268).



**23 Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.**

**verse 23** In Deuteronomy Moses prophesied of the coming Christ: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken . . . And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him” (Deuteronomy 18:15,17-19; cf. Acts 3:22-23).

Why did Jesus not quote the passage among the Nephites precisely as it reads in our present book of Deuteronomy? Perhaps he was citing the passage verbatim from the version preserved on the plates of brass. Or perhaps he was merely citing the passage as he knew it from the Hebrew Bible and adjusting the wording to suit his purposes. An example of this latter technique may be seen if one compares Isaiah 58:6; 61:1-2 with Luke 4:18-19.

Another question may be raised. Was a version of Deuteronomy contained on the plates of brass. It seems likely that it was since Jesus quotes a passage as if it were already known to his hearers. Additionally, in Alma 45:18-19 the disappearance of Alma the younger is compared to the disappearance of Moses. The only scriptural account of the death of Moses appears in Deuteronomy 34:5-7.

In what sense is Jesus “like unto” Moses? It seems clear that Moses was a type or symbol of the Savior. Let us mention some parallels between the two.

1. Both Moses and Jesus went up onto a mountain—Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the law—and Jesus “went up into a mountain” (Matthew 5:1) to give the law, the Sermon on the Mount. Thus Moses is the transmitter of the law, and Jesus is the giver or author of the law.

2. Moses was the gatherer of Israel who led the Israelites out of Egypt that they might gather in their own promised land. Jesus is leader the “new exodus” or “second exodus,” the gathering of the house of Israel in the last days. Isaiah 52 is known as a chapter dealing with the “second exodus” or Isaiah’s prophecies of the gathering of Israel in the latter days. Jesus quoted liberally from this chapter (3 Nephi 16, 20-21).

3, Moses lifted a brass serpent on a pole for all who had been bitten by serpents to see. Those who looked to the raised serpent would live and not die (Numbers 21:4-9). The resurrected Jesus said “Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life” (3 Nephi 15:9; see also John 3:14-15; Alma 33:19-22; Helaman 8:14-15).

4. Both Moses (Exodus 15:22-25; 16:1-8; 17:1-7; Numbers 20:2- 11) and Jesus (Matthew 15:33-38) miraculously provided food for their disciples.

**24 Verily I say unto you, yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have testified of me.**

**verse 24** Here is a profound truth which corroborates passages we have previously encountered in the Book of Mormon (Jacob 4:4; 7:11; Mosiah 13:33). Samuel was the first prophet of the nation of Israel and lived in about 1200 BC.

**25 And behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.**

**verse 25** The Savior confirms that the Nephites are pure descendants of Jacob or Israel and are children of the Abrahamic covenant. For a review of the specifics of the Abrahamic covenant, see the commentary for verse 12 of this chapter.

**26 The Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant—**

**verse 26** The Lord urges his hearers to repent and therefore be loyal to their royal heritage.

**27 And after that ye were blessed then fulfilleth the Father the covenant which he made with Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed—unto the pouring out of the Holy Ghost through me upon the Gentiles, which blessing upon the Gentiles shall make them mighty above all, unto the scattering of my people, O house of Israel.**

**verse 27** This verse is initially confusing in that it refers to the Gentiles' being blessed to be able to scatter the Lord's people, the house of Israel.

**“And after that ye were blessed”** The Lord starts by saying to the Nephites, in effect, “you are entitled to blessings as part of the house of Israel which include a promised land here in America. But then something happened that caused you to be scattered from off your promised land. The Father fulfilled the covenant which he had made with Abraham which included the spread of the gospel to all parts of the world. To accomplish this, the Father raised up a great Gentile nation, and the gospel was restored to the “Gentiles” in this nation. Many of these Gentiles were “Israelite Gentiles,” or actual Israelites who were citizens of the great Gentile nation. The missionaries of the Church—mostly “Israelite Gentiles”—will then spread the gospel to all the world to gather in Gentiles and the house of Israel. In providing the necessary

blessings to the Gentiles of the great Gentile nation so that they might be able to establish the Church and spread the gospel, the “Gentiles” were allowed to “scatter” the remnants of Israel (Native Americans) who were established in the land area of the great Gentile nation.

**28 And they shall be a scourge unto the people of this land. Nevertheless, when they shall have received the fulness of my gospel, then if they shall harden their hearts against me I will return their iniquities upon their own heads, saith the Father.**

**verse 28** “they shall be a scourge unto the people of this land” The Gentile founders of this great Gentile nation will be a scourge to those Native Americans with Hebrew origins. It is as though the Lord allowed the establishment of the great Gentile nation grudgingly, since its establishment made necessary the “scourging” or scattering of the remnant of the house of Israel from off their promised land. He did allow it, but here he issues a warning. Those Gentiles of the great Gentile nation, both in and out of the Church, had better remain righteous, or their sins will turn back on them and result in their own scourging.

**29 And I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people; and I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time, that I would give unto them again the land of their fathers for their inheritance, which is the land of Jerusalem, which is the promised land unto them forever, saith the Father.**

**verse 29** The Lord now addresses the subject of the Jews—“my people.” As with the rest of the house of Israel, the Lord has covenanted with them that they also will be gathered to their promised land—Old Jerusalem—in the latter days.

**30 And it shall come to pass that the time cometh, when the fulness of my gospel shall be preached unto them;**

**31 And they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name.**

**verses 30-31** Keep in mind that “gathering” is both a temporal and a spiritual phenomenon. Not only will the tribe of Judah be gathered back to Jerusalem, but they will also eventually accept Jesus Christ and his gospel. They will acknowledge him as their Redeemer, their Messiah. We know that this will not happen on a grand scale until after the Lord’s second coming (D&C 45:51-53).

**verses 32-45** In these verses, the Savior quotes some of the prophecies of Isaiah, specifically most of Isaiah chapter 52 (verses 1-3, 6-15). These prophecies deal with a time period in the last days just prior to the Millennium and foretell the gathering

of the house of Israel and the restoration of the gospel. To review the salient features of the scattering and gathering of Israel, see the introductory commentary for 1 Nephi 20.

It is notable that Nephi (1 Nephi 13:37), Jacob (2 Nephi 8:24-25), Abinadi (Mosiah 12:20-24; 15:13-18), and Moroni (Moroni 10:31) also quote from Isaiah 52, making it the most quoted chapter of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon.

### **32 Then shall their watchmen lift up their voice, and with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye.**

**verse 32 “Then shall their watchmen lift up their voice”** It was traditional in Palestine to place watchers or guards on the walls of the cities to observe those who approached. Symbolically, the watchmen are servants of the Lord assigned to teach, warn, and nurture the people (cf. Ezekiel 33:1-16)—priesthood leaders who keep watch over the Church and call out the good news of redemption.

**“together shall they sing”** This singing, of course, is an act of praising and rejoicing. See the commentary for verse 34.

**“for they shall see eye to eye”** Unity is one of the key characteristics of Zion. Moses recorded: “The Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18). Joseph Smith said, “What if all the world should embrace this gospel? They would then see eye to eye, and the blessings of God would be poured out upon the people, which is the desire of my whole soul” (*HC*, 5:259).

### **33 Then will the Father gather them together again, and give unto them Jerusalem for the land of their inheritance.**

**verse 33** The Lord is still addressing the subject of the eventual gathering of the Jews to Jerusalem. The implied sequence of their prophesied gathering is that they will first gather spiritually (“Then will the Father gather them together again”), then temporally (“and give unto them Jerusalem for the land of their inheritance”).

### **34 Then shall they break forth into joy—Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Father hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.**

**verse 34 “Then shall they break forth into joy—Sing together”** The gathering Jews will all sing a new millennial song of joy in honor of their gathering. The Lord has actually revealed the title of this song and its lyrics—see the commentary for 3 Nephi 16:18.

**“ye waste places of Jerusalem”** This expression refers to the ancient ruins of Jerusalem about to come alive again.

**35 The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Father; and the Father and I are one.**

**verse 35** “The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations” This expression has its origin in the Hebrew practice of throwing back the cloak from his right arm so that it does not produce an impediment in combat. At his second coming, Christ will make bare his arm when he shows forth his power for all to see.

“in the eyes of all the nations” All the world will know of his salvation, meaning the victory of our Lord over the forces of evil and corruption.

“and the Father and I are one” In this project of gathering of the Jews, and in all other projects and ways, the Father and the Son are “one.” Elohim and Jehovah—though separate personages—are infinitely more one than they are separate. In a way perfectly analogous, the whole plan of salvation centers in our learning to be one with Christ as he is one with the Father.

**36 And then shall be brought to pass that which is written: Awake, awake again, and put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.**

**verse 36** Here is the rallying cry for scattered Israel, particularly to their priesthood leaders and particularly to those of the house of Judah.

“Awake, awake again” While scattered, you have been spiritually sleeping.

“put on thy strength, O Zion” Roust out your leaders and have them put on the strength of their priesthood.

“put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem” Jerusalem (Zion) must throw off its slave garments and increase in beauty and holiness in preparation for the gathering of Israel. Putting on the beautiful garments is a metaphor for the gathering of the righteous. The faithful gatherer is like a bride putting on her wedding garments in preparation for the coming of the bridegroom, or Christ (Isaiah 49:18). In the latter days, the metaphor represents the covenant latter-day Saints as gathering to the stakes of Zion (D&C 82:14-15).

“for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean” No more will be found in Zion the disobedient, the sinners, the disbelieving Gentiles. The phrase “uncircumcised” is a metaphor for those who refuse the Lord’s covenants.

**37 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.**

**verse 37 “Shake thyself from the dust”** Rid yourself of the dust which represents sin, humiliation, and servitude.

**“arise, sit down”** Arise from the dust and sit down in a place or throne of honor in the Lord’s presence. Isaiah wrote that Babylon has been cast from a throne into the dust (Isaiah 47:1).

**“loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion”** The “bands of thy neck” refers to bonds, chains, or fetters used to restrain a captive. You are about to become free from the curses that God has placed upon you, especially the curse of being scattered among the Gentiles, and you will receive revelations from God (D&C 113:9-10).

**38 For thus saith the Lord: Ye have sold yourselves for naught, and ye shall be redeemed without money.**

**verse 38** The Lord is still prophesying of the Jews.

**“Ye have sold yourselves for naught”** You gave yourself away to sin and received nothing in return.

**“ye shall be redeemed without money”** You will be redeemed by the atonement of the Savior which cannot be bought with money or other worldly treasures.

**39 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that my people shall know my name; yea, in that day they shall know that I am he that doth speak.**

**verse 39** Again, “my people” refers to the Jews. At the Savior’s second coming, the Jews “shall know my name,” that is, they will begin to acknowledge Christ as Savior and Redeemer.

**40 And then shall they say: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings unto them, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings unto them of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!**

**verse 40** This verse portrays the Lord and his latter-day messengers, especially his prophets and missionaries, taking the gospel to scattered Israel. The gathered Jews, or others of gathered Israel, shall say of them:

**“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings”** The “mountains” describe where the gospel is preached. The “feet” represent the whole body of those who travel about preaching the gospel (Romans 10:14-15). “Good tidings” or “good tidings of great joy” is the good news of the everlasting gospel, especially the news that Christ has atoned for our sins. We can now have our sins removed and return to our celestial home. See also the commentary for Mosiah 15:15-18.

To “publish” is to announce, proclaim, or promulgate, or make heard.

The missionaries will say unto “Zion”—to gathered Israel—“Thy God reigneth!” You are presided over by your King, even Jesus Christ.

**41 And then shall a cry go forth: Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch not that which is unclean; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.**

**verse 41 “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence”** A warning to go out from spiritual Babylon, the wickedness of the world.

**“touch not that which is unclean”** We as the Lord’s covenant people must not touch or be involved with idols or any other thing of Satan (2 Corinthians 6:15-18).

**“be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord”** In ancient Israel, certain vessels (bowls, urns, vases, and other containers) and utensils were used in religious feasts and ceremonies. The vessels that were to be used in the temple had special significance and were handled only by those who were worthy and authorized (held the priesthood) and who had properly prepared themselves. The sacred vessels contrast directly with “that which is unclean.”

**42 For ye shall not go out with haste nor go by flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel shall be your rearward.**

**verse 42 “For ye shall not go out with haste nor go by flight”** When Israel left Egypt, she did so in haste and in flight (Exodus 12:39; Deuteronomy 16:3). When her people now go forth from Babylon, in the gathering to Zion, they will do so in peace, order, and safety, with neither haste nor flight (D&C 133:14-15).

**“for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel shall be your rearward”** A “rearward” is a rear guard, an individual guarding your back. The Lord will be with you. The verse suggests the participation of both the Father and the Son. Jehovah will lead them and the Father will come behind (D&C 49:27).

**verses 43-45** Here the Lord speaks of a latter-day “servant.” This could be a latter-day missionary. See the discussion of the possible identity of this servant below.

**43 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.**

**verse 43** The servant, possibly Jesus Christ, will have knowledge and insight to understand exactly what to do. Some have also identified this servant with the prophet Joseph Smith, citing 2 Nephi 21:9-11 as evidence that it must also apply to a servant who will come forth after Christ. See the commentary for verses 43-45 below for a more thorough discussion of the question of the identity of the servant.



**“he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high”** These terms likely represent the eternal destiny of the servant. *Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language* defines *extolled* as, “exalted in commendation; praised; magnified.”

**44 As many were astonished at thee—his visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men—**

**verse 44 “As many were astonished at thee”** The life and work of the servant will be so unlike that of his fellows that many will be amazed.

**“his visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men”** The servant will be greatly disfigured (“marred”) by his sufferings, both in face (“visage”) and in body. This refers to the suffering of the servant, Jesus Christ, or Joseph Smith.

**45 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him, for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.**

**verse 45 “So shall he sprinkle many nations”** To “sprinkle” means to purify or make clean. The JST version of Isaiah 52:15 changes the word “sprinkle” to *gather*. This latter-day servant will gather many nations.

**“the kings shall shut their mouths at him”** Even the heads of nations will be amazed at the work of this servant.

**“for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider”** The kings will see a work by this servant that they have never heard of or considered before (Romans 15:20; D&C 101:93- 95).

**verses 43-45** These verses foretell a servant of the Lord who is involved prominently in the final gathering of Israel. Although the identification of this servant is unknown, it is interesting to speculate a little as to his identity. Let us summarize his characteristics gleaned from these verses and then try to identify him:

1. “My servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.” In other words, he will have a vital role which he handles adroitly in the latter-day gathering of the house of Israel.

2. “His visage” and “his form” will be “marred more than any man,” so much so as to “astonish” many.

3. He will “sprinkle many nations.” Joseph Smith, as he was writing the JST, was given to understand that the original Hebrew text meant that the Spirit of the Lord would “sprinkle” itself upon the scattered children of Israel and cause them to gather together again. He therefore inserted the word “gather” instead of “sprinkle.”

4. “The kings shall shut their mouths at him, for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.” Before the servant, kings keep quiet in awe and reverential silence.

Now, who is this mysterious servant? Most people who write Bible commentaries feel it is Jesus Christ himself, especially since the very next verses of the book of Isaiah, chapter 53, continue to speak of a servant who is certainly Jesus Christ (see the commentary for Mosiah 14). The “marred” visage might refer to the marks of his crucifixion, and certainly, more than any man, he would command the respect of kings. However, the Book of Mormon provides strong evidence that this servant is not Jesus Christ. Read carefully 3 Nephi 21:9-11. Here the Savior seems to speak of a servant other than himself, and a latter-day setting is suggested. Some have suggested that Joseph Smith fits the description of this servant. After all, he is the prophet called to preside over the great latter-day restoration of the gospel and the gathering of Israel. Joseph was “marred” when he was assassinated on June 27, 1844. The Lord said he would heal his servant, which the resurrection certainly accomplishes.

**46 Verily, verily, I say unto you, all these things shall surely come, even as the Father hath commanded me. Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people be fulfilled; and then shall Jerusalem be inhabited again with my people, and it shall be the land of their inheritance.**

**verse 46** The question is still before us as to when the great covenant between the Lord and Israel, the Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 21

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 21:9-11** The Savior looks across the ages and prophesies of the prophet Joseph Smith. He said: The life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.

**verses 1-10** The message contained in these ten verses is simple and yet vitally important. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the latter days will be a sign or signal that the great work of the final gathering is about to begin. In an important sense, the Book of Mormon is a sign of the times. Other “signs of the times” include the establishment of a free people in the United States of America (verse 4); the restoration of the gospel (verses 8-9); the taking of the gospel to the Lamanites (verse 4); and the martyrdom of the prophet-servant of the restoration and his eternal triumph in the kingdom of God (verse 10).

**1 And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place—that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion;**

**verse 1 “And verily I say unto you”** The Lord here is apparently addressing the future scattered remnants of the Book of Mormon people. He is explaining to them how they might know when the Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled (see verse 46 in chapter 20).

When will the Abrahamic covenant be fulfilled? This verse contains a sign that the fulfillment of the covenant is “about to take place.” It is the great final gathering of Israel.

**2 And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign—for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles that they may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them;**

**verse 2** And here is yet another sign that the fulfillment of the covenant of Abraham is “about to take place.” And what is this sign? It is “when these things which I declare unto you . . . shall be made known unto the Gentiles that they may know concerning this people.” The sign is the coming forth of the Book of Mormon which

contains “these things” which the Lord is now declaring to the Nephites. The Book of Mormon will inform the Gentiles, and indeed all peoples, of that branch of Israel which was scattered to the New World.

**“concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them”** The Book of Mormon will inform the Gentiles of the great Gentile nation of the identity and origins of those remnants of the Book of Mormon people whom they are scourging and scattering as they establish themselves on the land of America.

**3 Verily, verily, I say unto you, when these things shall be made known unto them of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father, from them unto you;**

**verse 3** Here is a further description of the sign described in verse 2. “When these things (the writings contained in the Book of Mormon) shall be made known unto them (the Gentiles of the great Gentile nation) and when these things (the Book of Mormon) shall come forth from them (the Gentiles) unto you (the scattered remnants of the Nephites and Lamanites). The scattered remnant of these Book of Mormon peoples will know that the sign has occurred when the missionaries of the great Gentile nation deliver to them the Book of Mormon which informs them of their Israelite origins.

**4 For it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people, O house of Israel;**

**verse 4** It is wisdom that the Gentiles should be established in America as a free people in order that the gospel may be restored to them and that the Book of Mormon (“these things”) might be translated and delivered by them to the scattered remnant of the Book of Mormon peoples. This is a sign that the Abrahamic covenant is beginning to be fulfilled.

Here is also a reminder that the United States of America was established as a free nation by the power of God—“by the power of the Father.”

**5 Therefore, when these works and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter shall come forth from the Gentiles, unto your seed which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity;**

**verse 5** After the Gentiles in the great Gentile nation are established as a free people and carry the Book of Mormon to the remnant of the Nephite/Lamanite people, they will find the Book of Mormon remnants to have dwindled “in unbelief because of iniquity.”

**6 For thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that he may show forth his power unto the Gentiles, for this cause that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel;**

**verse 6** It is the will of the Father that “it” (the Book of Mormon) should be translated and promulgated by the Gentiles. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon—this manifestation of the Father’s power—will serve as a witness to the Gentiles as to the truth of the gospel in hopes that they may repent, join the Church, and secure their place for eternity in the house of Israel. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is the sign that the work of gathering in the latter days has commenced. Keep in mind that regardless of blood lineage, an individual’s place in the house of Israel is determined by their rejection or acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ: “For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews [or others with Israelite blood] as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 30:2).

We do not become covenant people until we accept the covenant gospel.

**7 And when these things come to pass that thy seed shall begin to know these things—it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel.**

**verse 7 “the work of the Father”** This is the work of gathering.

So, just when is it that the Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled? Read on!

**8 And when that day shall come, it shall come to pass that kings shall shut their mouths; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.**

**verse 8 “that kings shall shut their mouths”** Even the heads of nations will be amazed at the work of restoration and gathering. They will keep quiet in awe and reverential silence.

**“for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider”** The kings will see a work that they have never heard of or considered before (Romans 15:20; D&C 101:93-95).

Josiah Quincy, a man who became the mayor of Boston, visited Joseph Smith in Nauvoo. he later wrote:

It is by no means improbable that some future textbook, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the

destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: Joseph Smith the Mormon prophet. And the reply, absurd as it doubtless seems to most men now living, may be an obvious commonplace to their descendants (*Figures of the Past*, [Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883], 376-77).

It is reported that Leo Tolstoy said of the Mormons:

Their principles teach the people not only of heaven and its attendant glories, but how to live so that their social and economic relations with each other are placed on a sound basis. If the people follow the teachings of this church, nothing can stop their progress—it will be limitless. There have been great movements started in the past, but they have died or been modified before they reached maturity. If Mormonism is able to endure, unmodified, until it reaches the third and fourth generation, it is destined to become the greatest power the world has ever know (Thomas J. Yates, *Improvement Era*, February 1939, 94).

**9 For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and a marvelous work among them; and there shall be among them those who will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them.**

**verse 9 “for my sake shall the Father work a work”** The Father’s work here is the restoration of the gospel, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and the gathering of scattered Israel to the Church. This is all for the glory of the Son (“for [his] sake”). The gospel and Church are known by his name, the gospel and Church of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon will testify of him.

**10 But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.**

**verse 10** It seems likely that the Lord is referring to the man with the keys of the great latter-day gathering, Joseph Smith, Jr.

**“they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them”** Joseph would suffer terrible adversities, but he would not be “hurt” eternally. The Lord said words of comfort to the prophet Joseph as he languished in Liberty Jail: “And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors. And although their influence shall cast thee into trouble, and into bars and walls, thou shalt be had in honor; and but for a small moment and thy voice shall be more terrible in the midst of thine enemies than the fierce lion, because of thy righteousness; and thy God shall stand by thee forever and ever. Therefore, hold on thy way, and the priesthood shall remain with thee; for their bounds are set, they cannot pass. Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever” (D&C 122:3-4, 9).

One possible way in which the prophet Joseph Smith was “marred” and then “heal[ed]” by the Lord was the manner in which the Lord prepared for the loss of the 116-page manuscript by Martin Harris, showing that God’s “wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (D&C 10:43).

This phrase may also refer to the martyrdom of the prophet Joseph Smith (“he shall be marred”). In the kingdom of God Joseph will be healed and assume his place among the great prophets of God (“they shall not hurt him” “Yet I will heal him”).

**11 Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles, (it shall be done even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant.**

**verse 11** “which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles” The Lord is still speaking of him who holds the keys for the latter day work of gathering, Joseph Smith, Jr. The Prophet Joseph will bring forth the words of Jesus to the Gentiles in the Book of Mormon.

**“it shall be done even as Moses said”** See 3 Nephi 20:23 in which the Lord quotes the prophet Moses in saying that those in the latter days who do not accept the words of Christ will be “cut off from among the people.”

**verses 12-21** The Savior now quotes prophecies from the prophet Micah of Millennial events (Micah 5:8-15).

**12 And my people who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.**

**verse 12** Here again, is the same theme discussed twice previously in the commentary for 3 Nephi 16:15 and 3 Nephi 20:16. Please see the commentary for those verses.

**13 Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off.**

**verse 13** Israel will ultimately enjoy a great final victory over all non-Israelites. The setting for this great victory is at the beginning of the Millennium.

**14 Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots;**



**15 And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds;**

**verses 14-15** The Lord will incapacitate the armies of the unrepentant Gentile nations of the latter days. He will destroy their weapons—“horses” and “chariots,” and he will neutralize their defenses—“strongholds.”

**16 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy land, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers;**

**verse 16** The Lord will destroy also their false forms of worship.

**17 Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands;**

**18 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities.**

**verses 17-18** The “images,” “works of thy hands,” and “groves” refer to the Canaanite form of worship. The “images” and “works of thy hands” were man-made idols. The “groves” were poles or trees or stone pillars erected near the Canaanite temple’s altar in honor of Ashera, a Canaanite female deity, and Baal, a Canaanite male deity. The nature of worship in the groves was characterized by gross immorality.

**19 And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away.**

**verse 19 “priestcrafts”** “Priestcrafts” and “priestcraft” are words with a rather specific meaning. If a man represents himself as a priesthood or church leader, yet his primary motive is personal popularity, power, or financial gain rather than the selfless serving of his fellow man, then he is guilty of practicing priestcrafts or priestcraft.

**“whoredoms”** These are sexual sins, usually adultery.

**20 For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel;**

**21 And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.**

**22 But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance;**

**verse 22 “if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts”** See the discussion of hard-heartedness in the commentary for Alma 10:6.

**“remnant of Jacob”** This phrase refers to all the house of Israel, particularly the remnants of the scattered ten tribes, and not just the remnants of the Book of Mormon peoples.

**23 And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem.**

**verse 23** Those souls who repent and join with covenant Israel will assist the rest of gathered Israel in building Zion in America, the “New Jerusalem.” As has been discussed previously the work of gathering and building up of the New Jerusalem will be directed by the tribe of Ephraim which will hold the keys of presidency. The Lord will use the descendants of Joseph, through Ephraim, to bring the gospel to the world in the last days. As Joseph fed his brothers with bread in ancient times and thus was a blessing to them—although for a long time they did not know or recognize him—so in the last days the seed of Joseph, ordained and clothed with the gospel of salvation, has the “bread of life” to nourish the inhabitants of the earth who are in an impoverished spiritual condition. As it was anciently, so is it now. The recipients have hardly recognized or sensed that their benefactors are the literal descendants of Joseph, fulfilling their responsibility under the covenant of Abraham.

The Lord spoke through the prophet Enoch and prophesied of the building of the New Jerusalem: “And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem” (Moses 7:61-62).

**24 And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem.**

**25 And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst.**

**verse 25** Please review the commentary for 3 Nephi 20:22.

**26 And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people. Verily I say unto**

**you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem.**

**verse 26** Again, “the work of the Father” is the gathering of scattered Israel. This verse has a millennial setting.

**“And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day”** Commence? Has not the work of gathering been ongoing since the days of Joseph Smith? The “work of the Father” is the missionary work of the latter-day Church of Jesus Christ—the gathering of Israel. This verse and those few that precede it suggest that the missionary work, or the work of gathering, will commence at a very late date—following, for example, the building of the city of New Jerusalem, indeed, during the Millennium. The work of the Father shall commence during the Millennium in the sense that the pace of the work will greatly accelerate (see also 1 Nephi 14:17; 2 Nephi 30:7-15). See also the mention of the millennial gathering of the scattered tribes of Israel in the commentary for 2 Nephi 30:7-17.

**“at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem”** The implication of this phrase is that the Lehtes are not the only people that were dispersed out of the land of Jerusalem by the Lord. Hugh Nibley has described another group which may fit into this pattern:

In the time of Jeremiah, or shortly before, a certain Jonadab ben Rechab had led a colony of permanent settlers from Jerusalem into the wilderness, where his descendants survived through all succeeding centuries as the strange and baffling nation of the Rekhabites. What makes them baffling is their Messianic religion, which is so much like primitive Christianity in many ways that it has led some scholars to argue that those people must have been of Christian origin, though the historical evidence for their great antiquity is unquestionable. When one considers that Jonadab’s project was almost contemporary (perhaps slightly prior) to Lehi’s, that his name, ending in *-adab*, is of a type peculiar to the period and to the Book of Mormon, and that the Book of Mormon specifically states that the Lord had led other people of Jerusalem beside Lehi, and that the Rekhabite teachings are strangely like those in the Book of Mormon, one is forced to admit at very least the possibility that Lehi’s exodus could have taken place in the manner described, and the certainty that other such migrations actually did take place (*Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 68-69).

**27 Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name.**

**verse 27** Certain aspects of the gathering are prophesied to occur during the Millennium. An example is the major gathering of the ten tribes. Elder Bruce R.

McConkie wrote: "We do say that the great day of the return of the ten tribes, the day when the assembling hosts shall fulfill the prophetic promises, shall come after our Lord's return" (*Millennial Messiah*, 323).

The following dramatic Doctrine and Covenants verses describe the great gathering of the ten tribes: "He shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land; And the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided. And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows" (D&C 133:23-34).

**28 Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance.**

**29 And they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward.**

**verse 29** See the commentary for 3 Nephi 20:42.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 22

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 22** The Lord quotes Isaiah 54.

In chapter 22, the Lord quotes Isaiah chapter 54 which utilizes the metaphor of a “desolate” or “barren” woman who will be redeemed in the latter days. *Desolate* means alone, lonely, forsaken, forlorn, and wretched. The desolate woman represents Israel. Within the time frame of the latter days, Israel is initially scattered and desolate, but will eventually be redeemed or gathered to Zion.

*Zion* has had many meanings. Zion was the name of the city of Enoch in ancient times. Later, Zion was the hill where the temple was built in Jerusalem. Zion sometimes represents the celestial city where God lives. Throughout the scriptures, Zion refers to a covenant community of temple-worthy saints. Perhaps most commonly Zion is the kingdom of God on earth, the earthly Church of Jesus Christ. During the Millennium those who have accepted Christ and his gospel will live in a Zion society.

In this chapter, latter-day Israel is initially portrayed as being “desolate.” Israel is “desolate” and “barren” because: (1) She has too few children—those, at least, who are gathered to Zion. (2) She has no permanent home or resting place. (3) Her husband seems to have forsaken her. And (4), her adversaries are trying to destroy her.

The Lord tells Israel—actually us in these latter days—not to fear. He will remember all his promises to gather Israel and establish Zion in the latter days.

Once Zion is established, the saints in Zion do not live without challenges and trials. The faith of Zion must be proven in every generation. Zion receives a fulness of joy only after a time of loneliness, just as the spirit children of God receive eternal life only after they are tested by pain and death here in mortality. Zion enters the presence of the Lord only after a period of hardship. The saints may, at times, have cause to feel forsaken, but the Lord has not forgotten us, and he will have mercy on us. Even if the mountains were to flee, he would not forget his covenant, and his mercy will continue. He will establish the righteous in the city of New Jerusalem. All our enemies will be put down.

In the last days, or the time in which we now live, the Lord will bring many people to Zion, so many in fact that they will not all fit in one place. Rather than there being only one land of Zion, she will be established in many stakes, in many lands.

These promises should give us comfort both as a people and as individuals. The Lord will not forget us in our trouble. He always reaches out to comfort and to bless.

**verses 1-3** Zion will be established. This passage is an invitation for Zion to rejoice. Zion, who has heretofore not brought forth the desired number of children

(verse 1), will nevertheless eventually have children “on the right hand and on the left” (verse 3). The “children” are those Israelites who have gathered to the family of Christ as members of Zion, the Church and Kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth. No longer will all the righteous fit in the existing “habitations” of Zion, so her tent will need to be enlarged (verse 2). Zion will also “inherit the [lands of the] Gentiles” (verse 3), and thereby the stakes of Zion will be established and strengthened (verse 2).

**1 And then shall that which is written come to pass: Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.**

**verse 1 “And then shall that which is written come to pass:”** In the preceding chapters 20 and 21, the Lord has prophesied concerning events of the last days that will occur before the establishing of the Millennial Zion. These prophecies include: (1) The gospel will be restored in its fulness (3 Nephi 21:9). (2) The scattered remnants of Israel shall be gathered and taught the gospel (3 Nephi 20:13). (3) The great Gentile nation will initially scourge and scatter the remnants of Israel in the Americas (3 Nephi 20:27-28). Once scattered, the remnants of Israel will be taught the gospel by those in the great Gentile nation (3 Nephi 21:4). (4) Part of scattered Israel shall be gathered back to Old Jerusalem where they will hear the gospel message (3 Nephi 20:29-30). (5) The Lord’s people will build a city called the New Jerusalem (3 Nephi 21:23). This city will be the gathering place for others of the house of Israel including the “lost” tribes (3 Nephi 21:26). After all of these prophecies have commenced to be fulfilled, then shall the events prophesied in this chapter come to pass.

**“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear”** Sing, O barren wife, you who did not bear a child. This barren woman or wife is undoubtedly Israel who has never borne the promised fruit of her covenant with the Lord. Israel is barren because she has never brought forth spiritually strong offspring for the Lord. There are too few of the woman’s children gathered to Zion.

*Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language* defines *barren* as, “not producing young, or offspring.”

**“break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child”** Burst into song and shout for joy, you who were never in labor with child. Because of her wickedness, Israel has been separated from her husband, the Lord. Nevertheless, she is told to break into song and rejoice. Why should she rejoice? She will be blessed with children as a result of another’s travail, that of Christ.

**“for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord”** The desolate woman, who never had a husband, will give birth to many children—more even than the married wife. The married wife is Zion—the Church

and the New Jerusalem—whose husband is the Lord. The “children” are those who accept the gospel and join in the covenant with the Lord and become part of Zion. Who is this desolate woman? It is probably scattered Israel. It would appear that Christ intends this passage to mean that the children of the married wife are those who first build up the New Jerusalem, and the children of the desolate are those who are gathered later. It seems clear that the children of the desolate are greater in number.

## **2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes;**

**verse 2** This verse is basically a rallying cry for the gathering of the house of Israel in the latter days. Isaiah compares the Church or Zion to a tent. As Israel is gathered to the tent, it will have to be enlarged and strengthened because those who gather will do so in such great numbers.

The word “stakes,” as we use it in the Church today, has its origin in the Book of Isaiah. The word “stakes” is used twice by Isaiah, in this verse and in Isaiah 33:2. Tents formed the dwellings of some people in the ancient Hebrew world. The “cords” spanned the distance between the center pole and the tent’s stakes, thus forming the structure of the tents. The stakes are, of course, the various Church organizational units spread out over the earth.

The expression “spare not” means do not hesitate to utilize more cord and tent material.

## **3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.**

**verse 3** Various Bible versions translate the idiom break forth as “burst out,” “spread out,” or “spread abroad.”

**“thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles”** Israel will grow and expand in all directions until it covers the lands and cities of the Gentiles, many of which have been vacated because of the wars and upheavals of the last days. This phrase may also imply that the Gentiles will be “adopted” into the house of Israel as they are converted to the covenant.

**verses 4-10** Here is the Lord’s message of comfort to Israel. The Lord says that while he may have seemed to have forsaken Israel for a brief moment, he will gather her with great mercy and tenderness. Though Israel has suffered much, the Lord will eventually restore to her all blessings and will bring her unto himself. Like others, this passage is filled with references to Israel as a wife, clearly calling the Lord her “husband.” Marriage represents the most intimate, the most joyful, the most fulfilling relationship on earth. That is the kind of relationship the Lord is inviting us to join with him. The union of the saints in a Zion society, in which they are of one heart and one



mind, and the turning of the saints' ears to the Lord, make such a relationship with the Lord possible.

**4 Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed; neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.**

**verse 4** Don't be afraid, for you shall not suffer lasting shame. Neither shall you be confounded (meaning perplexed and confused). From youth to widowhood covers the whole of life. Even though Israel has suffered shame and reproach, both in youth and in old age, in the latter days the Lord will cause these things to be put behind her in the midst of his blessings. "Youth" may refer to Israel's days of sin before the exile (the scattering of the ten tribes by Assyria in 721 BC and the final scattering of Israel from her lands in AD 70 at the hands of Rome). "Widowhood" may refer to the time of exile itself when Israel was separated from her land and her God following the final scattering.

An instance of accidental repetition, during the production of the Book of Mormon, occurs in this verse. This is clearly a typographical error produced during the publishing. The italicized words in the following phrase quoted from this verse were those accidentally repeated: "for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy *youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.*" This is a quotation from Isaiah 54:4, and it has been pointed out that not only does the KJV Isaiah not have these added words, but those words appeared first in the 1837 edition. Also, they were not in the corrected printer's copy. In addition, the added words do violence to the poetic parallelism found in Hebrew poetry. The phrase in Isaiah 54:4 reads: "for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more" which is exactly the phrase in 3 Nephi 22:4 with the italicized words removed.

**5 For thy maker, thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel—the God of the whole earth shall he be called.**

**verse 5** Once again the Lord identifies himself as the maker and husband of Israel. When the Lord returns to redeem Zion, he will be as a loving and tender bridegroom who forgives, reconciles with, and cares for an estranged wife.

The etymology of the English word *husband* is a compound of "house" and "prepare." Thus, a husband is "one who prepares or builds a house." This helps explain Isaiah's use of the work *maker* as a synonym for husband. The Lord is Israel's husband or "house-builder" because he makes the earth as a home for all creatures, he creates bodies as temples for spirit children, he builds temples as places of worship, and he prepares heavenly mansions for his children.

**“Lord of Hosts”** See the commentary for 1 Nephi 20:2.

**“the God of the whole earth”** Idol worshipers felt that each of earth’s many gods held jurisdiction over a limited area. But of course Jehovah is the God of every creature on the face of the earth.

**6 For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.**

**verse 6** Israel has been cast off because of her sins, as a sinful wife might be forsaken or refused. Like a wife forsaken, Israel grieves because of her separation from her Lord.

**“For the Lord hath called thee”** In spite of her sins, the Lord calls latter-day Israel to gather unto Zion and unto him.

**“a wife of youth, when thou wast refused”** Israel was cast off in her younger and more sinful days.

**7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.**

**verse 7** For only a short time I abandoned thee, but with great love shall I gather thee back. See the introductory commentary for 1 Nephi 20 for a summary of the gatherings of Israel. In the latter days, the Lord will gather Israel back into his fold as a shepherd gathers his sheep into the fold at night, or as a farmer gathers his crops into his barn at harvest time. The gathering will occur primarily through missionary work, as the Lord’s servants range throughout the world seeking those honest in heart who will come unto Christ and his true Church. In addition to this gathering of hearts and souls, later on, after the Lord’s second coming, the Jews will gather to their land of promise in Palestine. It also appears that there will be a gathering of a large group of the ten tribes, who may return en masse from the land or lands of their exile. This will also likely occur after the Lord’s second coming (D&C 133:23-34).

Likewise, our moment of separation from God here in mortality is relatively brief when compared to the vast eternity during which we will live in his presence.

**8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.**

**verse 8** In a surge of anger, I turned away from thee for a moment, but I will yet turn to thee in kindness and mercy. In spite of the fact that Israel deserved rejection by the Lord, the Lord in his mercy will hold forth kind compassion to Israel in the latter days.

A Jewish childbirth custom may shed light on the significance of the phrase “I hid my face from thee for a moment.” Among orthodox Jews, a husband is not allowed to watch his wife going through the labor of childbirth. He sits in the corner of the delivery

room with his back turned so that she will not feel embarrassed or immodest in her unavoidable hour of agony. He does not abandon her, although she may feel very much alone. The woman recites or sings psalms as she endures contractions. When the pain becomes too great for her to continue singing, the husband takes over, reciting psalms for her. Although Israel cannot see the Lord in the time of her probation, when she weeps, he weeps with her. When she sings, he rejoices with her. The relationship between the Savior and Israel is one of “everlasting kindness.”

**9 For this, the waters of Noah unto me, for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee.**

**verse 9** The Lord says, “To me this situation is like unto the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. Now I swear to you that in the end I will no longer be angry with Israel.” The “waters of Noah” symbolize a great and terrible judgment for wickedness. The promise the Lord is here making to Israel is as valid as that he made to Noah, though it is difficult to imagine a time when Israel will not need a little chastening and rebuking from the Lord (D&C 95:1). Perhaps the time will eventually come when Israel will be sufficiently righteous that she shall not need chastisement from the Lord.

**10 For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.**

**verse 10** Mountains and hills are symbols of stability (Psalm 36:6). “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my steadfast love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace (of heart and soul) with you be broken, saith the Lord.” In other words, the Lord makes clear that his word and his commitment to his people Israel are more reliable than even the mountains and hills.

**verses 11–17** The Lord continues his promises to latter-day Israel. He will establish her in righteousness and protect her from oppression (verse 14). Those who seek to fight against her will fail (verses 15, 17); those who speak against her will be condemned (verse 17). Her city, the New Jerusalem, will be beautiful (verses 11-12), and her children will “be taught of the Lord” and will have peace (verse 13).

These verses promise rich blessings to the faithful. The promise of peace (verse 14) fulfills the covenant spoken of in verse 10. The blessing of righteousness (verse 14, 17) flows from Christ’s atonement (verse 11). Those now afflicted by life’s storms (verse 11) will yet be established on safe, firm foundations (verses 11, 14). And the people “not comforted” (verse 11) will be taught, protected, and blessed (verses 13-17).

These things come to the faithful through the Lord's mercy. Though our diligent efforts are necessary to bring us to the Lord, ultimately it is his grace that enables us to receive his blessings: "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (verse 17).

**11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.**

**verse 11** The New English Bible renders this verse, "O storm-battered city, distressed and disconsolate," referring to scattered and troubled Israel. The city would be Jerusalem or the New Jerusalem which are symbolic of Israel.

**"Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires."** The "stones" are building stones. Here the Lord promises to restore and beautify Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem—to build a beautiful city of Zion for gathering Israel.

**12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.**

**verses 11-12** The "windows," "gates," and "borders" are elements of Jerusalem's architecture, and together they symbolize the whole city. Again, Jerusalem here is symbolic of Israel.

"Windows" is more correctly translated as battlements or towers which are set atop walls and used for defense.

"Borders" are the outer walls of the city.

The precious stones mentioned symbolize the love and care the Lord will lavish on his people—the spiritual and temporal blessings the Lord will pour out on them. "Sapphires" mentioned in verse 11 were sparkling blue stones, but probably not the sapphires of today. "Agates" likely were what we know as rubies. "Pleasant stones" can better be translated as "precious stones."

Actually, ancient gem names commonly identified minerals entirely different from the minerals known by those same names today. For example, "sapphire" is said to be Hebrew and is used repeatedly in the Old Testament for the gem known today as lapis lazuli. Bible translators sometimes supplied gem names common in their culture without regard for biblical intent (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 2:899). For example "carbuncle" is a term from the Middle Ages referring to any cabochon-cut red stone, usually garnet.

**verses 13-17** In these final verses, Isaiah emphasizes the peaceful conditions that will prevail in Zion, perhaps particularly the millennial Zion.

**13 And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.**

**verse 13** It is uncertain from the context whether this phrase means that the children will be taught about the Lord or that they will be taught by the Lord. Perhaps both interpretations are correct. The majority of English translations provide some variation of the reading, “All thy children shall be taught by the Lord.” This verse implies that there will be an intimate relationship between the Savior and the people in Zion, especially during the Millennium.

**14 In righteousness shalt thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression for thou shalt not fear, and from terror for it shall not come near thee.**

**verse 14** In righteousness you shall be established. Tyranny will be far from you, and you will have nothing to fear. Terror, also, will be far removed. Zion, particularly the millennial Zion will not be troubled by unjust rulers who will oppress, neither by invasion of enemies. This verse has served as a reassurance to the saints that those in Zion will be visited by the Lord’s peace, and they will not fear.

**15 Behold, they shall surely gather together against thee, not by me; whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.**

**verse 15** If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing. Whoever attacks you will surrender to you. In other words, no power will prevail against the Lord’s people.

**16 Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.**

**17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall revile against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.**

**verses 16-17** Since it is the Lord who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges weapons; and since it is the Lord who created also him who would do violence to Zion, he can surely assure the inhabitants of Zion that no weapon forged against them and born by a “waster” shall prevail. The Lord assures Zion that anyone, including Satan himself, who works his havoc and spreads rumors against the inhabitants of Zion, will fail. Zion will be able to successfully refute every word of gossip, slander, and accusation said against them in a court of law.

**“This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord”** The servants of the Lord may look forward to and expect blessings that are theirs by right or inheritance or birthright, even as children may expect to share in their parents’ estate.

**“their righteousness is of me”** Ultimately, our own righteousness is insufficient to save us. Even though our broken hearts and our submissive obedience are required

to bring us unto Christ, it is his mercy and grace that finally save us. It is his atonement that makes takes up where man's puny efforts at righteousness fall short.

The Lord's covenant with Israel, the Abrahamic covenant, will finally be fulfilled by Christ's kingdom's being established over the whole earth, as stakes are organized, and Israel—both the Israelites by descent and the adopted Gentiles—settle down in peace. This will be in the beginning of the Millennium.

As yet, the covenant is only beginning to be fulfilled. The descendants of Abraham are blessing the nations of the earth by carrying the gospel to all peoples. This is a marvelous time to be on the earth, a period the ancient prophets foresaw and yearned for. The work is being done to usher in the Lord's great Millennial reign.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 23

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 23:1-3** (see also Mormon 8:23) Search these things diligently, for great are the words of Isaiah. Surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel.

**1 And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah.**

**verse 1** The importance the Savior places upon the writings of Isaiah is obvious. Can you imagine how honored the prophet Isaiah must feel over the Lord's quoting him and then commanding that the people search his writings? It is probably of little practical use to speculate as to why the Savior feels Isaiah's writings are so important. The important fact is, that he does, and so should we! Yet, how we struggle to really understand Isaiah's words and the implications of his poetic forms. Elder Bruce R. McConkie's writings on this subject do not let us "off the hook":

If our eternal salvation depends upon our ability to understand the writings of Isaiah as fully and truly as Nephi understood them—and who shall say that such is not the case!—how shall we fare in that great day when, with Nephi, we shall stand before the pleasing bar of him who said: "Great are the words of Isaiah"?

It just may be that my salvation (and yours also!) does in fact depend upon our ability to understand the writings of Isaiah as fully and truly as Nephi understood them. For that matter, why should either Nephi or Isaiah know anything that is withheld from us? Does not that God who is no respecter of persons treat all his children alike? Has he not given us his promise and recited to us the terms and conditions of his law pursuant to which he will reveal to us what he has revealed to them? ("The Keys to Understanding Isaiah," *Ensign*, October 1973, 78).

From the standpoint of understanding the origin and authorship of the book of Isaiah, this is an important verse. The Savior has just finished quoting Isaiah chapter 54, and he says, "a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah. Why is that so important? Most biblical scholars reject the idea that the prophet Isaiah actually wrote chapter 54 of Isaiah. They assign the authorship of chapters 40 to 56 of Isaiah to an unknown author whom they call "deutero-Isaiah." Here Jesus affirms that Isaiah did write chapter 54.

**2 For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles.**



**verse 2** There can be no disputing that the main theme of Isaiah's writings are the Messiah and the destiny of the house of Israel. He writes of how Israel has forsaken the religion of their fathers and thus has been forsaken by the Master and scattered. He also writes of how in a future day they will be gathered back into the Savior's fold.

**"he must speak also to the Gentiles"** The Gentiles are advised also to study his words, as there are important messages in Isaiah's writings of great worth to the Gentiles. We know that "Gentiles" come in a few varieties (see the commentary for 1 Nephi 10:11). Actually, it doesn't really matter which category the Gentile falls into. Any individual who accepts Christ and his gospel (regardless of his blood line) becomes a member of the covenant house of Israel, and likewise any person who rejects him (also regardless of his blood line), is not accepted into the house of Israel as one of his covenant people.

### **3 And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake.**

**verse 3** All of Isaiah's prophecies have come to pass or will come to pass.

**"have been and shall be"** The Lord also may have wished to convey the idea that Isaiah's words have dual or multiple fulfillment. They may apply simultaneously to Isaiah's own time and to our time as well. Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie wrote:

Thus the past becomes the key that unlocks the future. As history has its cycles, so prophecies have multiple fulfillments and repeated applications. Isaiah's prophecies of events now past foretell events yet future. The past is the stage upon which the future is portrayed. The scriptures thus have a timeless value and an eternal relevance (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, volume 1:282*).

The past historical events described in scripture are intended by the Lord to be a type and shadow of what is to come. Therein lies their relevance to us.

### **4 Therefore give heed to my words; write the things which I have told you; and according to the time and the will of the Father they shall go forth unto the Gentiles.**

**verse 4** The Lord is speaking here, mainly to Nephite prophets. This is another prophecy of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

### **5 And whosoever will hearken unto my words and repenteth and is baptized, the same shall be saved. Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things.**

**verse 5** Jesus's command was in a way more applicable to the Nephites than it is for us, since they had access to the brass plates of Laban, a less edited and

adulterated record than our Old Testament. The simplest points of Christ's saving doctrines are often obscured in our present-day Hebrew Bible.

**6 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he said unto them again, after he had expounded all the scriptures unto them which they had received, he said unto them: Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not.**

**verse 6** “Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not” The Savior has perceived a deficiency in the Nephite scriptural record.

**7 And it came to pass that he said unto Nephi: Bring forth the record which ye have kept.**

**verse 7** Exactly what record is the Lord suggesting that Nephi bring to him? Nephi would have brought the entire scriptural record kept by Nephites including the collection of plates called the large plates of Nephi and the single set of plates, the small plates of Nephi.

**8 And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said:**

**verses 9-13** An important principle is illustrated in the following five verses. The Savior is careful to make certain we know that every single one of his promises and prophecies to us are fulfilled. In other words, he would have us learn that the words of the Lord do not “fall to the ground” (see 1 Samuel 3:19). In this manner he intends that we will acquire complete trust in him.

**9 Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so?**

**10 And his disciples answered him and said: Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.**

**11 And Jesus said unto them: How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?**

**12 And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written.**

**13 And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded.**

**verses 6-13** Some confusion has resulted from these verses. Please read carefully the commentary for Helaman 14:25. I will not repeat the controversy explained in that commentary. Yet another explanation has been suggested to explain the deficit in the Nephite scriptures to which the Savior is referring. Perhaps the Savior is pointing out that the entire account of the preaching and prophesying of the prophet Samuel in 6 BC from the wall around Zarahemla was not, at the time of the Savior's visit to the Nephites, written into the Nephite record. These same individuals have suggested that it was not included because Samuel was, after all, a Lamanite. They further opine that following the Lord's command in 3 Nephi 23:13, Nephi did record Samuel's account onto the large plates of Nephi in its present temporal context (see Helaman 13-16). Mormon then included the account onto the plates of Mormon as he edited the large plates of Nephi. The main objection to this suggestion that the entire account of Samuel's prophesying was omitted is that here in verses 6-13, Jesus seems to be suggesting that the scriptural deficiency was only a limited part of Samuel's prophesying—that part having to do with the fact that “many saints” would arise “from the dead, and . . . appear to many.”

**14 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had expounded all the scriptures in one, which they had written, he commanded them that they should teach the things which he had expounded unto them.**

**verse 14** “**Jesus had expounded all the scriptures in one**” The Savior demonstrated how the scriptures and the prophetic word bear harmonious witness, especially of him. It would have been fascinating to have been in attendance at that discourse.

Three different topics have been suggested by McConkie, Millet, and Top as potential subjects he might have addressed that day:

1. Later on that second day of his Nephite ministry, the Lord “did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory—yea, even all things which should come upon the face of the earth, even until the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth should be wrapt together as a scroll, and the heavens and the earth should pass away; And even unto the great and last day, when all people, and all kindreds, and all nations and tongues shall stand before God, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people” (3 Nephi 26: 3-4, 6).

2. He might have taught the entire plan of salvation out of the scriptures, perhaps even opening the heavens and providing the visions necessary to understand what had been, what was, and what was to come. This is the type of panoramic vision experience that was had by Enoch (Moses 6-7), Moses (Moses 1), Nephi (1 Nephi 11-15), the brother of Jared (Ether 3), and Joseph Smith (D&C 76). On a later occasion,

the Prophet Joseph explained, “I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them” (*TPJS*, 305).

3. He might have demonstrated clearly from the scriptures that all things bear witness of him (Moses 6:63). Such a discourse might have verified the testimony of the prophet that “none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ” (Jacob 7:11; Mosiah 13:33; 3 Nephi 20:24). As the resurrected Lord walked on the road to Emmaus with two disciples, they failed to discern who it was that had joined them. Before their conversation ended, the scripture says that “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27) (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, volume IV, Third Nephi through Moroni*, 159-60).

It would seem most likely that his discourse laid stress on that toward which all scripture points—the mission of Jesus Christ. After doing this, this verse tells us that he commanded his disciples that they teach to others what he had taught them.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 24

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 24 and 25** The prophet Malachi on tithing (Malachi 3) and the return of Elijah (Malachi 4)

Certainly the three-day instructional session in which these fortunate Nephites are participating is certainly among the greatest teaching “seminars” in the history of the world. He was teaching people who were sufficiently righteous to have escaped the destructive purging of the Book of Mormon people. He was thus able to teach them freely without any constraint from unrighteous people in the congregation. It is interesting and instructive to note the techniques he used in teaching them. For one thing, he drew freely from the teachings he previously had inspired his prophets to write. He sometimes quoted entire chapters. For example, 3 Nephi 22 is the Lord’s quoting of Isaiah chapter 54. 3 Nephi chapters 24 and 25 are the Lord’s quoting of Malachi chapters 3 and 4. Malachi was the last of the great Hebrew prophets of whom we have any record who ministered unto the Jews. The brass plates obviously could not have included the teachings of the prophet Malachi who prophesied about 430 BC, about 150 years after Lehi left Jerusalem. The Nephites, therefore, had no knowledge of his prophecies, but received them with joy from the mouth of the Savior, Himself.

Some of Malachi’s prophecies were so significant that the Father commanded that they be included in the Nephite record, the Book of Mormon.

Both of these chapters from Malachi (3 Nephi 24-25) are somewhat fragmented in that both contain a diversity of materials. Thus this segment of 3 Nephi has the character of disconnected utterances, indeed a quote book, instead of one continuous prophecy. Appreciation is expressed to Kent P. Jackson and his essay, “Teaching from the Words of the Prophets,” in *Studies in Scripture, Volume 8* (198-207) from which some of the following commentary is taken.

Perhaps the central theme of 3 Nephi 24 is the law of tithing.

**1 And it came to pass that he commanded them that they should write the words which the Father had given unto Malachi, which he should tell unto them. And it came to pass that after they were written he expounded them. And these are the words which he did tell unto them, saying: Thus said the Father unto Malachi— Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.**

## 2 But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap.

**verses 1-2** In these verses the prophet Malachi prophesies of a messenger who would be sent to prepare the way before his coming in glory. The setting and the terminology of this passage suggest that the Lord's "coming in glory" refers to the Lord's second coming, yet the same words are used in the New Testament to describe John the Baptist, who was the messenger sent to prepare the way before the Lord's coming in mortality (see Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2). Verse 1 tells of the appearance of the Lord "suddenly" in his temple, asking rhetorically who will be able to endure his coming and the cleansing that will accompany it.

These verses do not identify the messenger to whom Malachi referred. Some reasonable candidates for messengers of the restoration include: John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John, who restored the keys of the priesthood to Joseph Smith; Elijah, the bearer of priesthood keys, whose coming is the subject of discussion in Malachi's writings in the next chapter; and Moroni, the messenger who set the latter-day work into motion. The prophet Joseph Smith is also a good candidate. Perhaps Malachi had in mind a collective ministry of all the messengers who restored doctrine and keys in the last days, each in turn preparing the way for Christ. Brother Kent Jackson even suggests that perhaps a broader interpretation may be valid. Perhaps the gospel itself—restored in the latter days to make the world ready for the Lord—is the messenger sent before him: "I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek to it, and to be a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me" (D&C 45:9).

## 3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

**verse 3** "that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" After the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity, the priestly Levites became lax in their religious obligations, and because of their bad example, the rest of the nation became remiss in their duties. Malachi pointed out that the sacrifices they offered to the Lord were the worst of the flocks or even stolen animals, rather than the best. Thus, because the priests were unrighteous, their sacrifices were unacceptable, and the Lord promised that when he comes again, he will purge the Levites that they may yet offer an offering in righteousness (Malachi 3:1-3).

But just who are the Levites, and what kind of offering will they make? One view holds that the Levites are present-day priesthood holders in the Church. In May of 1829 John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the priesthood of Aaron. On that occasion the Baptist quoted the prophet Malachi. The canonized version of that quote in D&C 13 has led to some confusion. However,

Oliver Cowdery recorded an account of that same experience. His account was written in 1834 and is now found in the extended footnote at the end of the Joseph Smith-History in the Pearl of Great Price. Oliver's account, which contains a variation in wording from Joseph's version in section 13, reads: "Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of the Messiah, I confer this Priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon the earth, *that the sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness!*" (Italics mine). This version may give a clearer sense of what was intended. The term "sons of Levi" should be interpreted as meaning the Latter-day bearers of the priesthood. The offering which the Lord will require of latter-day priesthood holders may not be an actual animal sacrifice, but more likely simply works of righteousness.

Some, however, have seemed to teach that the practice of blood sacrifice will be restored to the earth in this latter-day dispensation. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

We are living in the dispensation of the fulness of times into which all things are to be gathered, and all things are to be restored since the beginning. Even this earth is to be restored to the condition which prevailed before Adam's transgression. Now in the nature of things, the law of sacrifice will have to be restored, or all things which were decreed by the Lord would not be restored. It will be necessary, therefore, for the sons of Levi, who offered the blood sacrifices anciently in Israel, to offer such a sacrifice again to round out and complete this ordinance in this dispensation. Sacrifice by the shedding of blood was instituted in the days of Adam, and of necessity will have to be restored.

The sacrifice of animals will be done to complete the restoration when the temple spoken of is built; at the beginning of the millennium, or in the restoration, blood sacrifices will be performed long enough to complete the fulness of the restoration in this dispensation. Afterwards, sacrifice will be of some other character (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:94).

An alternate view as to the proper identity of the sons of Levi is that the descendants of Levi, who still exist among the Jews throughout the world, are still rightful heirs to the priesthood of Aaron. They are now outside of the covenants of the gospel, which are found only in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thus, these Levites are unable to fill the role to which their family had been chosen by revelation and set apart in ancient times. As part of the restoration of all things, the tribe of Levi once again will fill a priesthood function in the Lord's kingdom—after they become converted, are purified at the Lord's coming, join the Church, and are born again of the Spirit.

**4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.**



**verse 4** This rather enigmatic verse suggests that after the priesthood holders in the Lord's earthly kingdom begin to make offerings in righteousness, then the "offering of Judah and Jerusalem" will be pleasant or pleasing unto the Lord. Joseph Smith attempts to explain this sequence: "The Lord will purify the sons of Levi, good or bad, for it is through them that blessings flow to Israel. . . . And then, and not till then, 'shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years'" (Joseph Smith, March 21, 1841, recorded by Martha Jane Coray, Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 66).

**5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts.**

**verse 5** The time reference seems to be the time of the Lord's second coming in glory. The Lord will be swift to judge those individuals and societies who are guilty of sins against God and fellow beings. He will return in glory, pronounce a righteous judgment upon the ungodly, and cleanse the earth of its telestial elements by fire.

**6 For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.**

**verse 6** The Lord is long-suffering and patient with scattered Israel. Though they have strayed, he does not destroy them and will offer them another chance to repent in the next verse.

**7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts. But ye say: Wherein shall we return?**

**verse 7** Again the time frame is the final dispensation. Scattered Israel has strayed from the Lord's commandments and ordinances. But the Lord makes a merciful offer: "If you return to me, I'll return to you."

**"Wherein shall we return?"** Some of scattered Israel may not know how to return to the Lord. In the next verse, the Lord will make a most practical suggestion—start by paying your tithing.

**8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say: Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.**

**9 Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.**

**10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, 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.**

**11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the fields, saith the Lord of Hosts.**

**12 And all nations shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of Hosts.**

**verses 8-12** It is notable that the Lord's teaching on the law of tithing was included in the Lord's recitation to the Nephites. We do not know whether the Nephites lived the law of tithing prior to the Lord's appearance in addition to the sacrifices necessary under the law of Moses. Though it is not stated, it seems reasonable to assume that they did live the law of tithing following his visit with them.

**13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say: What have we spoken against thee?**

**verse 13** **"Your words have been stout against me"** While the word *stout* can mean strong or firm, here it seems to mean "proud; resolute; obstinate" (*Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language*).

**"What have we spoken against thee?"** Again, the scattered rebellious Israelites persist in denying their sins.

**14 Ye have said: It is vain to serve God, and what doth it profit that we have kept his ordinances and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?**

**15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.**

**verses 14-15** The sinful Israelites protest that it does them no immediate good to serve God and keep his ordinances and wear a sad face in acknowledgment of their sins. "Just look around you," they say, "everyone is happy and living in favorable circumstances—including the proud, the wicked, and they that tempt God. Why bother to obey God?"

The answer lies in the parable of the wheat and tares: "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field; But while he slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the wheat into my barn; and the tares are bound in bundles to be burned" (JST, Matthew 13:22-29).

So which will we choose, the barn or the burning?

A parenthetical note: The Lord always first gathers the righteous out from among the wicked as is stated in this corrected JST version of the parable. The King James Bible version renders Matthew 13:30: "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." The Doctrine and Covenants clarifies and confirms this order: "Ye shall first gather out the wheat from among the tares, and after the gathering of the wheat, behold and lo, the tares are bound in bundles, and the field remaineth to be burned" (D&C 86:7).

Another parenthetical note of interest is to summarize the "gatherings" in the Book of Mormon text subsequent to the "gathering" of Lehi's family out from among the wicked in Jerusalem. These include:

1. The Lord directed Nephi and the righteous in his group to depart from his wicked brothers and from the land of their first inheritance in the New World (2 Nephi 5).
2. Warned of the Lord, Mosiah led his people out of the land of Nephi (Omni 1:12).
3. Converted by Abinadi's teaching, Alma prompted the believers to withdraw from Noah's kingdom and to gather at the waters of Mormon. Then, divinely "apprised of the coming of the king's army," the colony left their homes behind and began their own city (Mosiah 18:4-7, 34).
4. The Anti-Nephi-Lehies, who were converted by the sons of Mosiah, hearkened to the Lord's commandment to leave the Lamanites and establish a righteous society in Jerushon (Alma 27:12- 14).

In each of these cases, a righteous people were warned by God, under the direction of a prophet, to separate themselves from the wicked. Also in each case the chosen group was led into a "wilderness" where they were prepared and proven. As D&C 86:3 suggests, it is the tares that "choke the wheat and drive the church into the wilderness." Finally, in each case the chosen people eventually receive their rest in a promised land where they begin to build a Zion society.

The early history of restoration the Lord's Church in this dispensation also followed this pattern. It was marked by a series of siftings, gatherings, and journeyings in the wilderness led from New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. As a result, a colony of pioneers departed into the wilderness to endure a "little season" of chastening, growth, and refinement in order that Zion may be redeemed (D&C 100:13; 101:3-4). Finally they were gathered to the Great Basin.

So what is our situation today? We live in the Great Gentile nation, a nation allowed by the Lord to exist by compromise. While his inspiration was evident in its founding, neither he nor his prophets stand at the head of it. There is, by constitutional mandate, a separation of church and state. While the Lord's Church has been restored to this nation, and from this nation is being promulgated the gospel, the Lord has clearly prophesied this nation's eventual destruction. The Lord is now tolerating the rampant apostasy that exists here. He is allowing the tares to grow among the wheat. As one

surveys the prophecies of the last days, it is apparent that the Lord is almost grudgingly awaiting the proper time to dispatch the destroying angels. He is allowing the gathering to continue, and tolerating the ripening iniquity of this Gentile nation. He is doing it because he must. However, this nation is sealed up to eventual destruction. It is vital that the “wheat” or righteous element in this nation stand in holy places and separate themselves from the world. To be gathered one day to the Master’s celestial “barn,” we must each depart from Babylon though we literally abide in the midst of it. We must make certain that the distinction between us and the tares is clear. It would seem like the hybrids will also not survive the coming destruction.

**16 Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.**

**verse 16** Again, the time is prior to the Lord’s second coming in glory. The names of the righteous—“they that feared the Lord”—are recorded in the Lord’s “book of remembrance” which is the same as the “Lamb’s Book of Life” (see Alma 5:57- 58; D&C 76:68; 88:2; 132:19).

**17 And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.**

**verse 17** The Lord’s judgment at his second coming will separate the wheat from the tares. In the fervent heat of the second coming, the counterfeit jewels will melt away, while the genuine jewels will shine forth with glory.

**18 Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.**

**verse 18** The Lord hypothesizes, “If you were able to see the righteous and wicked together prior to my second coming, you would be able to easily identify the those in each group. Those serving me are the righteous. The wicked are serving me not.”

## 3 Nephi Chapter 25

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This chapter consists of the Savior's quoting Malachi 4. The central theme of 3 Nephi 25 is the return of the prophet Elijah. Please review the introductory discussion for 3 Nephi 24.

**verses 1-2** Elder Bruce R. McConkie has suggested that in these two verses the prophet Malachi may have been quoting from the ancient prophet Zenos whose writings are contained only on the plates of brass. The setting for the fulfillment of these verses is the destruction of the wicked that will be part of the earth's cleansing preparatory to the Lord's return in glory.

The reader should compare these two verses here in 3 Nephi 25 with two verses in 1 Nephi 22 (verses 15 and 24) likely written by the prophet Zenos:

"For behold, saith the prophet, the time cometh speedily that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men; for the day soon cometh that all the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned" (1 Nephi 22:15).

"And the time cometh speedily that the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory" (1 Nephi 22:24).

**1 For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.**

**verse 1** When Jesus returns, the earth must be purified. Whether by repentance or by destruction, wickedness of all forms must be removed before Christ will dwell here, for only those who are worthy will be privileged to live in his presence.

It seems clear that the usage of the image of such phrases as the wicked burning "as stubble" was not unique to Malachi. Nephi quoted "the prophet" (probably Zenos) as using similar language (see the introductory commentary for verses 1-2 above and the commentary for 1 Nephi 22:15).

**2 But unto you that fear my name, shall the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall.**

**verse 2 "Son of Righteousness"** This expression refers to the Savior. Years ago Sidney B. Sperry pointed out that the word "Son" here should probably have been written "Sun" ("The Book of Mormon and Textual Criticism," in *Book of Mormon Institute*, BYU Extension Publications, 5 December 1959, 5). The expression is a quote from Malachi 4:2. The Hebrew texts of Malachi 4:2 contain the word *shemesh* which means

“sun” and not the word *ben* which means “son.” Keep in mind that the Book of Mormon was dictated by Joseph Smith and transcribed largely by Oliver Cowdery. Obviously *son* and *sun* sound alike. The matter is of little importance to the meaning of the verse since the expression “Sun of Righteousness” also refers to the Savior.

The image of the “Son” (or “Sun”) of Righteousness is particularly relevant considering what the Nephites had just endured prior to the Lord’s coming. Following their great holocaust where destruction and calamity were everywhere, the “Sun of Righteousness” had arisen in their midst with spiritual and physical healing in his wings.

The image of “healing in his wings” is the promise afforded the righteous in direct contrast to the curse that awaits the wicked. It is the power of the atonement.

**“ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall”** The image here is that of gathering to Christ and to the lands of their inheritance.

### **3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of Hosts.**

**verse 3** This verse continues the theme of destruction of the wicked and the ultimate victory of good over bad. Some of the righteous might be a bit uncomfortable with the aggressive tone of this verse, since it places them in the role of the destroyer.

### **4 Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.**

**verse 4** “Horeb” is another name for Sinai.

At first this verse would seem to be a reminder to observe the law of Moses which was in force in Malachi’s day but was fulfilled in Christ. In this particular setting this counsel seems somewhat out of place. Perhaps the Lord’s counsel here has reference to something else. In commenting on this verse, Joseph Smith taught: “[The] law revealed to Moses in Horeb never was revealed to the children of Israel,” apparently referring to the higher law revealed to Moses which Israel did not receive because of rebellion (see JST Exodus 34:1-2; D&C 84:23-25). It may have been the prophet Malachi’s intent, and Jesus’s intent in quoting this verse to draw attention to the higher law, even the fulness of the gospel, that Moses obtained but that Israel was unworthy to receive. In that case, the reference here to the law received by Moses would not be out of place with the discussion in the following verses concerning Elijah’s coming. Jesus’s listeners on this occasion were worthy and able to receive the higher law, priesthood, ordinances, and blessings that God revealed to Moses on the mountain that their Israelite ancestors had forfeited.

### **5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord;**

**6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.**

**verses 5-6** When Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith in September 1823, he quoted Malachi 4:5-6, but with significantly different wording from the way it appears in either the King James Bible or here in the Book of Mormon. Moroni said, “Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (D&C 2:1). So Elijah was to restore to the earth an important aspect of the priesthood. Why send Elijah? The Prophet Joseph taught:

**Elijah was the last prophet that held the keys of this priesthood, and who will, before the last dispensation, restore the authority and deliver the keys of this priesthood in order that all the ordinances may be attended to in righteousness. . . . Why send Elijah? Because he holds the keys of the authority to administer in all the ordinances of the priesthood, and without the authority the ordinances could not be administered in righteousness (Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 43.)**

This prophecy of the prophet Elijah’s coming was fulfilled in our dispensation on April 3, 1836, when Elijah and other ancient prophets who held the keys of various priesthood functions appeared to the Prophet Joseph and restored their keys to the earth. What exactly did Elijah restore? He restored the keys whereby all priesthood ordinances performed on the earth may be rendered valid both on earth and in heaven. This is referred to as the “sealing power.” Generally, we are prone to think of the coming of Elijah as essential to the great genealogical or family history work of the Church. But there is more. The sealing power pertains to all priesthood ordinances done for the living or for the dead. Because of the keys that Elijah restored, all priesthood ordinances including those having to do with our eternal family ties are valid, now and in the eternities. These ordinances include baptism, priesthood ordinations, and all those ordinances performed in the temple including celestial marriage, sealings—both for the living and for the dead.

Elijah came to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.” Joseph Smith taught that “the word “turn” here should be translated “bind” or “seal” (*Ibid.*, 318). Through the temple ordinances, God’s promises to the fathers—the promises pertaining to the gospel and eternal increase (Abraham 2:8-11)—are extended to all God’s children. The hearts of the children are bound to the ancient fathers because the children are now participants in and recipients of the blessings of the fathers. Being profoundly grateful for such privileges, members of the Church (motivated by the “Spirit of Elijah”) also find their hearts turning to their more immediate fathers, and they do all within their power (through genealogical research and subsequent temple work) to ensure that the blessings of the ancient fathers are enjoyed by ancestry as well as posterity.

**“lest I come and smite the earth with a curse”** Why would the Lord smite the earth with a curse? One reason is that there would be no binding and sealing powers



whereby families could be cemented forever. The earth would not have accomplished its foreordained purpose—to establish on its face a family system patterned after the order of heaven. In addition, without the sealing power *all* covenants entered into by man upon the earth would be of no force in the eternities. This would make null and void the entire system of covenants whereby man grows spiritually upon the earth and has an opportunity to attain celestial glory. This would prevent the earth from fulfilling its mission as an effective venue for mortality and for testing. The plans and designs and schemes and activities of mortal man would be basically purposeless from an eternal perspective. The earth would fail to “answer the end of its creation” (D&C 49:16).

It seems likely that the Savior’s visit to the Nephites initiated an era of intense temple activity among them. It is also likely he used Malachi’s prophecy as a means to emphasize the role of eternal marriage and the other blessings of Elijah’s sealing mission (see 4 Nephi 1:11). We would also assume that baptisms for the dead were subsequently practiced among the Nephites, just as they were in the Old World (see 1 Corinthians 15:29).

## 3 Nephi Chapter 26

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 26:14** The Savior did teach and minister unto the children, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, even greater than he had revealed unto the people.

**1 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had told these things he expounded them unto the multitude; and he did expound all things unto them, both great and small.**

**verse 1** “he did expound all things unto them” To “expound” means to explain. We will learn in verses 3 and 4 that Jesus delivered to the multitude a great discourse which included “all things” from the beginning to the winding-up scenes of the world’s mortal existence and even beyond, to the final judgment.

One may well wonder if Jesus even taught the people all of the contents of the great vision of the brother of Jared (see Ether 4:2).

**2 And he saith: These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations.**

**verse 2** The Lord reiterates that it was the Father who commanded him to give them those scriptures that were not available to them. While there may have been others, we know of only Malachi 3 and 4.

**3 And he did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory—yea, even all things which should come upon the face of the earth, even until the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth should be wrapt together as a scroll, and the heavens and the earth should pass away;**

**verse 3** *Wrapt* means wrapped; wound; folded; enclosed. This verse, of course, describes the great destruction of the telestial elements of earth at the time of the Lord’s second coming. At this time the old earth shall pass away making way for a new millennial earth. This destruction is the burning up of the telestial elements of the earth that will occur at the time of the Savior’s second coming. It is often referred to as “the end of the world.” The term “end of the earth” is usually reserved for that time, following the millennial thousand years, when the terrestrial earth will be further cleansed and become celestialized.

**4 And even unto the great and last day, when all people, and all kindreds, and all nations and tongues shall stand before God, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—**

**5 If they be good, to the resurrection of everlasting life; and if they be evil, to the resurrection of damnation; being on a parallel, the one on the one hand and the other on the other hand, according to the mercy, and the justice, and the holiness which is in Christ, who was before the world began.**

**verse 5** Mormon here refers to two resurrections. Please review the complete sequence of resurrections in the commentary for 2 Nephi 9:15.

**“the resurrection of damnation”** This is the “second resurrection” as discussed in 2 Nephi 9:15—the resurrection of the telestials and then the resurrection of those mortals bound for outer darkness. See the brief discussion of what it means to be damned in the commentary for 2 Nephi 9:24.

**“being on a parallel, the one on the one hand and the other on the other hand, according to the mercy, and the justice, and the holiness which is in Christ”** These phrases may seem to be superfluous. The Webster’s 1828 Dictionary contains one definition of the word parallel that is “to compare.” It could be that the Savior used these phrases to invite the hearer to a careful comparison of the everlasting implications of the two resurrections.

**6 And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people;**

**7 But behold the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people.**

**verse 6-7** The prophet Mormon reminds us that the large plates of Nephi contained the “more part” (the large part or majority) of Christ’s teachings to his disciples and to the multitude, but Mormon’s abridgment of those plates onto his plates of Mormon, which we have in our present-day Book of Mormon, contains a greatly abridged version—not even a “hundredth part.”

**8 And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.**

**verse 8 “that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles”** Mormon has written a part of the teachings of Jesus that they may be made available to the remnants of the Book of Mormon people (“this people”) through the Book of Mormon. This book will be delivered to the Book of Mormon remnants by the “Gentiles”—the missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—citizens of the “mighty nation among the gentiles” (1 Nephi 22:7).

**9 And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them.**

**verse 9** Here is an exciting promise—that those who receive and accept the Book of Mormon’s limited version of Christ’s teachings (“this” and “these things”), will one day receive “greater things.”

Here is also an important gospel principle. The “greater things” are made manifest unto us in the Lord’s due time, in accordance with the faith with which we receive what has already been revealed.

In the Lord’s mercy, he has revealed to us what, in his wisdom, he knows what we need and what we will accept (Alma 29:8). If we feast upon and believe what has been revealed already, more will be revealed to us, either through the inspiration of the Spirit or through the revelation of more scripture. Is it any wonder that modern prophets have counseled us repeatedly to make scripture study an important part of our lives?

But there is a downside of this principle (see verse 10).

**10 And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation.**

**verse 10** This principle was taught eloquently by Alma: “And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell” (Alma 12:9-11).

**11 Behold, I was about to write them, all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbade it, saying: I will try the faith of my people.**

**verse 11** Your author humbly proposes a “conjectural emendation” of his own in this verse. I would suggest that the verse flows more clearly if the comma following the word “them” were moved to follow the word “all.”

The principle here is clear. One way the Lord tests or tries a people is to provide them with limited knowledge or information on a spiritual topic. This tries their “deliberate faith” by requiring them sometimes to obey his commands with limited insight into the reasons for and implications of that commandment (See *Deliberate Faith and Revealed Faith* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume one, chapter 10). Deliberate faith—deliberate obedience, however, will inevitably result in greater understanding.

**12 Therefore I, Mormon, do write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord. And now I, Mormon, make an end of my sayings, and proceed to write the things which have been commanded me.**

**verses 11-12** It is fascinating to learn that Mormon intended to enter all of the Lord's teachings to the Nephites from the large plates of Mormon, but the Lord forbade him. This, so that the Lord could test our faith with the lesser portion of his teachings contained in the Book of Mormon according to the principle discussed in verses 9-11 above. This process of "trying the faith" of the people is actually a loving and merciful act on the part of the Lord. It is important that we begin to develop faith in "small things" and progress on to greater things as are spiritually prepared. The Lord declared, "For I will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith" (D&C 98:12). Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught, "Just as there will be many more church members, families, wards, stakes, and temples; later on there will also be many more nourishing and inspiring scriptures. However, we must first feast worthily upon that which we already have!" (CR, October 1986, 70).

**13 Therefore, I would that ye should behold that the Lord truly did teach the people, for the space of three days; and after that he did show himself unto them oft, and did break bread oft, and bless it, and give it unto them.**

**verse 13** The Savior ministered to the Nephites daily for three days and then visited them from time to time as need and circumstance warranted.

**14 And it came to pass that he did teach and minister unto the children of the multitude of whom hath been spoken, and he did loose their tongues, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, even greater than he had revealed unto the people; and he loosed their tongues that they could utter.**

**verse 14** "they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, even greater than he had revealed unto the people" Here is a most remarkable occurrence. It is difficult to imagine that the utterances of these children could be greater than those things which the Lord had taught to their parents and the rest of the people there gathered. We are left wondering how this might be possible. Was the veil parted to allow them to speak of life in the premortal state? Were they able to discourse about life in the celestial environment? Did they express an understanding of doctrinal mysteries which today's world could not receive? One is reminded of a prophecy of the prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28; see also Alma 32:23).

**15 And it came to pass that after he had ascended into heaven—the second time that he showed himself unto them, and had gone unto the Father, after having**

healed all their sick, and their lame, and opened the eyes of their blind and unstopped the ears of the deaf, and even had done all manner of cures among them, and raised a man from the dead, and had shown forth his power unto them, and had ascended unto the Father—

**verse 15** Note that this verse is an incomplete sentence. It will be completed in verse 16.

This verse concludes the activities of the second day of the Lord's ministering to the people.

Thus begin the activities of the third day of the Lord's ministry among the Nephites. Apparently we are told about the third day's activities only briefly and in general terms. Subsequent to verse 18, Mormon's comments become more general and probably apply to that period of time after the third day when the Savior appeared among the people only intermittently as they needed him.

**16 Behold, it came to pass on the morrow that the multitude gathered themselves together, and they both saw and heard these children; yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things; and the things which they did utter were forbidden that there should not any man write them.**

**verse 16** See the commentary for verse 14.

**17 And it came to pass that the disciples whom Jesus had chosen began from that time forth to baptize and to teach as many as did come unto them; and as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost.**

**18 And many of them saw and heard unspeakable things, which are not lawful to be written.**

**verse 18** It is not entirely clear whether Mormon's reference here is to the twelve special witnesses or to those who were baptized into the church of Christ (see verse 21). The latter seems more likely as is evidenced in the following three verses.

**19 And they taught, and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another.**

**verse 19 "all things in common"** This phrase does not mean that everyone pooled all resources and shared everything in common, all having equal amounts. It means, rather, that every person and family had an equality according to their needs (cf. Acts 2:45; 4:32, 35; D&C 51:3).

They lived successfully the law consecration and stewardship. As we learned earlier in this dispensation, this system can only work if the participants are filled with the pure love of Christ and are inclined to deal "justly, one with another."

**20 And it came to pass that they did do all things even as Jesus had commanded them.**

**21 And they who were baptized in the name of Jesus were called the church of Christ.**



## 3 Nephi Chapter 27

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 27:8** How be it my church save it be called in my name?

**3 Nephi 27:13-16** The Savior said, Behold, I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father because my Father sent me, and my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross. And after that I had been lifted upon the cross that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

**3 Nephi 27:20** The Savior said: Now this is the commandment—repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

**3 Nephi 27:27** The Savior to his twelve Nephite disciples: And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.

**3 Nephi 27:28-29** The Savior to his twelve Nephite disciples: Whatsoever things ye shall ask the Father in my name shall be given unto you.

**3 Nephi 27:33** Enter ye in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein.

It would appear that throughout this chapter the Lord is instructing his twelve disciples, or apostles, and not the multitude in general.

**1 And it came to pass that as the disciples of Jesus were journeying and were preaching the things which they had both heard and seen, and were baptizing in the name of Jesus, it came to pass that the disciples were gathered together and were united in mighty prayer and fasting.**

**verse 1 “the disciples were gathered together and were united in mighty prayer and fasting”** In the Book of Mormon, fasting is mentioned in various circumstances and apparently was used for a few different purposes (see the commentary for Mosiah 27:22) including fasting to mourn the death of an important figure, fasting to petition the Lord for certain blessings (petitionary fasting), fasting in preparation for obtaining certain blessings from God, and fasting as a religious rite or a devotional exercise—as in this verse. Fasting as a rite or exercise is the practice of fasting as an offering to the Lord. This type of fasting is uncommon in the Book of Mormon before the appearance to the Nephites of the resurrected Christ (see Omni

1:26; Helaman 3:35). Following his appearance, fasting is mentioned only as a devotional practice (see also 4 Nephi 1:12; Moroni 6:5). It is interesting to note that fasting as a devotional exercise is not found in the Old Testament before the Babylonian exile, but it bursts into full bloom during the early pre-Christian centuries and is also frequently mentioned in the New Testament (an example is Luke 2:36-38).

**2 And Jesus again showed himself unto them, for they were praying unto the Father in his name; and Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said unto them: What will ye that I shall give unto you?**

**3 And they said unto him: Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us the name whereby we shall call this church; for there are disputations among the people concerning this matter.**

**verse 3** It is unclear why disputations arose concerning the name of the church. The church organization had been first formally established among the Nephites in the days of the senior Alma. Since that time it appears that the church had been called the “Church of Christ” or the “Church of God” (Mosiah 18:17; 25:18, 23; Alma 4:5; 3 Nephi 26:21). However, this was a new day. The Mosaic dispensation had ended, and the Messianic dispensation or the dispensation of the meridian of time had begun. Even though the Nephites had held the priesthood in its fulness and had enjoyed the blessings of the gospel from the days of Lehi and Nephi, they had continued to observe the Law of Moses. They had offered sacrifices, and they had conformed to the Mosaic law’s “myriad moral principles and its endless ethical restrictions” (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, 427). In this new dispensation covenants and faith had replaced the old law. The law had become “dead” unto them. Perhaps it is for these reasons the people had begun to wonder if the church was to be called by a new name in this new dispensation.

**4 And the Lord said unto them: Verily, verily, I say unto you, why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing?**

**5 Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day;**

**verses 4-5** The Lord seems a bit surprised that there is any disputation over this question. Apparently there were some among the people who felt that the church should be called by a name other than that of the Savior. Mormon had already stated that the church was already called by his name (see 3 Nephi 26:21).

**verses 6-11** Brother Robert L. Millet has provided a provocative introduction to these verses:

**The church or body of Christ is a true and living thing only to the degree that it is imbued and animated by Christ. Like an individual, the church must take upon it the**

name of Christ—meaning his divine influence, attributes, and nature—in order to enjoy his transforming powers. Those who are noble in character, kindly in deed and manner, considerate, and compassionate—what the bulk of the Western world would call “Christian” in nature—but who refuse to take upon themselves the name of Christ (and all that such a commitment entails), are not fully Christ’s nor are they Christians in the total and complete sense. They remain in a lost and fallen state yielding to the enticings of the spirit of the evil one and to the nature of things in a fallen world and are without God in the world (Alma 41:11) and, as such, are without tie to the family of God. They are spiritual orphans, nameless and family-less, in a lone and dreary world. And what of the church? It is made up of people, and to the degree that those congregants are as yet unredeemed and unregenerated, the church cannot be the light that is so desperately needed in a darkened world, cannot make available that life and that energy that flow from its great Head (“This is My Gospel,” *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This is My Gospel*, 3-4).

## **6 And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day.**

**verse 6** When we are baptized into the Church we enter into a covenant with God. We take upon ourselves his name and announce our candidacy and our desire to be exalted in the celestial kingdom. At the time of our baptism, however, we are not guaranteed that exaltation. If, over our lifetime, we diligently persist in our efforts to become like the Savior, then we may eventually qualify for that highest of all eternal rewards. At that time we shall have the name of Christ sealed upon us forever. Recall that King Benjamin pleaded with his people: “I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life” (Mosiah 5:15).

## **7 Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name that he will bless the church for my sake.**

**verse 7** Robert L. Millet has written:

From the days of Adam, the divine decree has gone forth: ‘Thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the son forevermore’ (Moses 5:8). All things are to be done in his holy name. *All* things. We are to speak, act, preach, and prophesy in the name of the Son. We are to heal the sick and raise the dead in the name of the Son. We are to conduct the business of the Church and perform the ordinances of salvation in the name of the Son. We are to do what we do in the name of Jesus Christ and speak and act the way our

blessed Master would under similar circumstances (“This is My Gospel,” *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This is My Gospel*, 3-4).

Everything redemptive is accomplished in the name of Christ, who mediates all transactions between God and man.

**8 And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses’ name then it be Moses’ church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel.**

**verse 8** Notice in this verse that it is not sufficient for a church to be called after the name of Jesus Christ. Anyone can form a church and place the Savior’s name upon it. The Lord states here “it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel.”

What is the purpose of the Lord’s church which bears his name? It administers his gospel by teaching his doctrine and by making available his ordinances (covenants) with the proper authority to perform those ordinances.

**9 Verily I say unto you, that ye are built upon my gospel; therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call, in my name; therefore if ye call upon the Father, for the church, if it be in my name the Father will hear you;**

**verse 9** Brother Millet also wrote:

We ever pray for the growth and proliferation of the Church of Jesus Christ, which is the kingdom of God on earth. We plead mightily for the expansion of the work of the Lord in all nations, and among all kindreds, tongues, and people. We petition the Father in the name of the Son, and, when our prayers meet the divine standard, they are offered under the direction of the Holy Ghost. We pray for the church that bears the name of his Son, and we pray for special outpourings of light and power “for Christ’s sake,” meaning because of or on account of what Christ has done for the church and, more particularly, we pray for those who constitute the sheep of his fold. We ask sincerely that the judgments of God may be turned away, and the mercies of heaven extended, all because of the mediation and intercession of the Holy One of Israel (*Ibid.*, 5-6).

**10 And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel then will the Father show forth his own works in it.**

**verse 10** From other scriptures we learn that some of the Father’s works include spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-14; D&C 46:10-26), living prophets, service, and his sustaining love.

**11 But if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you they have joy in their works for a**

**season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return.**

**verse 11 “built upon the works of men”** C. S. Lewis observed:

Many people seek to invent some sort of happiness for themselves without God. And out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, slavery—the long terrible story of people trying to find something other than God which will make them happy. The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us—invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing (*Mere Christianity*, 53-54).

The “works of the devil” are what the apostle Paul called “the works of the flesh”—such sins as adultery, fornication, idolatry, hatred, strife, and heresy (Galatians 5:19-21).

The Lord often allows the designs and creations of men to bring temporary pleasure, “joy,” and satisfaction. It is a profound truth that creations of men and of the world cannot produce lasting happiness and a fulness of joy. They cannot produce an inheritance in the celestial kingdom.

**“hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return”** Perhaps this phrase refers to the fate of those cast into outer darkness.

**12 For their works do follow them, for it is because of their works that they are hewn down; therefore remember the things that I have told you.**

**verse 12 “For their works do follow them”** This phrase is an apt succinct definition of the law of restoration.

**verses 13-22** In these following verses the Lord defines his gospel. The reader is referred to the introductory discussion for 2 Nephi 31 which contains a discussion of the “doctrine of Christ” which is the gospel of Christ. The reader is also reminded that the gospel is fundamentally the “good news” of the Savior’s atonement with all its implications—that man can now be forgiven of his sins and return to his celestial home. All other aspects of the gospel are mere appendages to his atonement. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “Nothing in the entire plan of salvation compares in any way in importance with . . . the atoning sacrifice of our Lord. . . . It is the rock foundation upon which the gospel and all other things rest. . . . Indeed, the atonement is the gospel” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 60).

**13 Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.**

**verse 13 “and this is the gospel . . . that I came into the world to do the will of my Father”** So essential is the atonement of Christ to a meaningful mortal existence for mankind that on occasion it is referred to as “the gospel.” This same doctrine was audibly declared from the heavens to the Prophet Joseph: “This is the gospel, the glad tidings . . . that he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world” (D&C 76:40-41). The LDS Bible Dictionary defines the gospel as “good news” and then adds, “The good news is that Jesus Christ has made a perfect atonement.”

In a more expansive sense, the gospel is referred to as all those principles and ordinances that comprise the plan of salvation (see D&C 39:6). Even when used in this latter sense, however, we must remember that those principles and ordinances have life and efficacy only because of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice. That is exactly what Enoch taught: “This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten” (Moses 6:62).

**“that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me”** A concept fundamental and indispensable to the gospel is that Jesus is literally divine. He was commissioned by his Father, and by some unfathomable but actual process his body was the literal offspring of his Heavenly Father and his earthly mother. Not only do we listen to and obey him, we worship him. He is our Lord and our God. There is a growing tendency in the world today among those who identify themselves as Christians to focus mainly on his moral teachings and downplay his divine sonship. The flawed logic of this view is colorfully articulated by C. S. Lewis as he warns against saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus:

**“I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to (*Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan, 1952, 55-56).**

Increasingly in the world, Christianity is becoming defined as a system of social ethics, and Christ is coming to be regarded as a great moral teacher, the originator of a great social gospel. This view ignores the essence of Christianity which is the doctrine

of Christ. We may succinctly define the doctrine of Christ as follows: Jesus Christ is the literal and divine son of God the Father. He came to earth to suffer in Gethsemane and on the cross, to atone for our sins, enabling us to one day to live forever with him in the kingdom of our God. Our purpose on earth is to become more like Jesus—to begin to acquire his attributes. The purpose of his Church and gospel is to help us in that endeavor. As we strive to become like him, the Spirit of God blesses our lives with spiritual gifts which are the incremental elements of the attributes of the Savior. The Spirit also extends to us repeatedly the blessings of Christ’s atonement that our sins may be forgiven. As we receive these gifts and become like him, we will be inclined to think as he thinks and act as he acts. We will certainly embrace all that today is called “ethical Christian behavior,” but we will embrace it not out of a sense of duty. Rather, it will be a part of us and completely natural for us to do so. We will hardly be able to do otherwise. We will joy without tiring in serving our fellow men purely out of a sense of love, even the pure love of Christ.

**14 And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—**

**verse 14** This verse begins the Savior’s final declaration to the Nephite people.

**“that I might draw all men unto me”** The Savior’s atonement provided the means whereby he may allow men who repent and accept his gospel to return to him in the celestial heaven.

**“as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works”** Because the Son has been crucified by men, all men will be “lifted up” or resurrected. This, of course, is the unconditional blessing of the atonement. Like so many other scriptural verses, this particular verse again suggests that the sequence is first resurrection, and then the judgment. We have commented previously that a man’s resurrection *is* his judgment since he is resurrected with that eternal body which betrays his eternal abode—celestial, terrestrial, telestial, or outer darkness. It seems likely that the judgment which follows the resurrection is the formal ceremonial pronouncement and sealing of the eternal fate of all of the family of Adam.

**15 And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.**

**verse 15** Presumably the Lord’s being “lifted up” refers here to his being lifted up on a cross as in the previous verse. This verse states that if there had been no



atonement, a man could not be judged according to his works. And why not? Because his righteous works would have to go unrewarded. Because of the Savior's atoning sacrifice, the righteous works of a man are counted for his spiritual credit, and he receives the spiritual gifts contingent upon his obedience. Had Jesus not atoned for our sins, we could not receive spiritual gifts in return for our obedience to the Lord's commandments. The law of justice would not allow it. And why would the law of justice not allow it? Because it is simply not fair that we receive magnificent gifts of the Spirit in return for our relatively puny efforts to obey.

**verses 16-22** In these following verses, the Savior reiterates those principles and ordinances with which a man must comply in order to fully embrace the blessings of his atonement. The reader may wish to review *Justification and Sanctification in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17.

**16 And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.**

**17 And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father.**

**verse 17** “**cast into the fire from whence they can no more return**” Perhaps we ought to be cautious about taking this verse too literally. Some hyperbole is likely is being employed here. Throughout the Book of Mormon, the doctrine taught regarding the post mortal life is incomplete and simplistic. Please see the commentary for 2 Nephi 31:14.

**18 And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfilleth the words which he hath given, and he lieth not, but fulfilleth all his words.**

**19 And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.**

**verse 19** “**no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom**” A reminder that justification, or sinlessness, as well as sanctification are necessary for exaltation.

“**nothing entereth into his rest**” For a discussion of the concept of the “rest of the Lord,” please review the commentary for 2 Nephi 21:10. See further discussion of this important spiritual gift in “Two Little-Appreciated Gifts of the Spirit” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 10, *Deliberate Faith and Revealed Faith* and in “The Fruits of Faith” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 11, *Other Notes on*

*Faith.* Still further discussion of this topic is found in “The Rest of the Lord—the Gift of Hope” in the same volume, chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*.

Here the phrase “entereth his rest” seems to refer to exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

**“who have washed their garments in my blood”** To be extended or offered the blessings of the atonement and be forgiven of one’s sins is to wash one’s garments in the blood of the Savior.

**20 Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.**

**verse 20 “sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost”** The Holy Ghost, in one of his many roles, is the Sanctifier. The meaning of this verse should be abundantly clear to the reader who has studied *Justification and Sanctification* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17.

**21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do;**

**verses 19-21 “this is my gospel”** Again, the reader should have reviewed the introductory commentary for 2 Nephi 31. The Lord Jesus is the ultimate exemplar, the perfect standard of living the gospel. We must think as he thinks, say what he says, feel as he feels, and do what he does.

**“for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do”** We must become pro-active in learning of his matchless character and striving to emulate him.

**22 Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.**

**verse 22** In this verse, the phrase “lifted up” seems to mean more than resurrected. It means exalted. The phrase “lifted up” has come to have three distinct meanings: Christ’s crucifixion, man’s resurrection, and man’s exaltation.

**23 Write the things which ye have seen and heard, save it be those which are forbidden.**

**24 Write the works of this people, which shall be, even as hath been written, of that which hath been.**

**verses 23-24** Again, keep in mind that the Lord is speaking to his twelve disciples.

**25 For behold, out of the books which have been written, and which shall be written, shall this people be judged, for by them shall their works be known unto men.**

**verses 23-25** One book of scripture out of which man will be judged is the Book of Mormon.

**26 And behold, all things are written by the Father; therefore out of the books which shall be written shall the world be judged.**

**verse 26 “all things are written by the Father”** Mankind is judged out of the books that the Father has caused to be written—both on earth and in heaven. What books are these? Perhaps the final record is kept in our own souls. Will we not be judged by a perfectly perceptive Lord according to what we have become? President John Taylor said: “My understanding of the thing, is that God has made each man a register within himself.” President Taylor went on to describe this “record.” “Man cannot kill it; there is no decay associated with it. . . . 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.’ . . . When we get into the eternal world, into the presence of God our Heavenly Father, his eye can penetrate every one of us” (*JD*, 11:77-79).

**27 And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.**

**verse 27** In some way, that has not been revealed to us the Nephite twelve and Christ’s apostles in the Old World will be involved in the judgment of the righteous of the house of Israel. The Lord himself will issue the decrees of damnation to the wicked.

**“even as I am”** Perhaps here is the criterion by which we will be judged. How much have we progressed to become like him? Joseph Smith referred to the Savior as the prototype of a saved being (*Lectures on Faith*, 7:16).

**28 And now I go unto the Father. And verily I say unto you, whatsoever things ye shall ask the Father in my name shall be given unto you.**

**29 Therefore, ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for he that asketh, receiveth; and unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened.**

**verses 28-29** Evidently these disciples had reached the point in their worthiness that they would not ask for anything that was inappropriate or unrighteous. Here Jesus places no conditions on his offer to the disciples. Thus, whatever they asked would be granted. This magnificent gift is probably the essence of the sealing power (see the commentary for Helaman 10:7).

**30 And now, behold, my joy is great, even unto fulness, because of you, and also this generation; yea, and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels, because of you and this generation; for none of them are lost.**

**verse 30** Isn't it exciting to see what can be accomplished among a people during this mortal life!

**31 Behold, I would that ye should understand; for I mean them who are now alive of this generation; and none of them are lost; and in them I have fulness of joy.**

**verses 30-31** The Lord expresses his satisfaction with this group of Nephites who escaped destruction. Does the Lord here seal every one of them up to their exaltation? We know that all who were spared the great destruction in 3 Nephi 8 were righteous to a certain extent—though all were also urged to repent. We conclude that, while there were no wicked among them, there were likely those who would inherit terrestrial glory. These latter are not considered completely lost by the Lord.

**32 But behold, it sorroweth me because of the fourth generation from this generation, for they are led away captive by him even as was the son of perdition; for they will sell me for silver and for gold, and for that which moth doth corrupt and which thieves can break through and steal. And in that day will I visit them, even in turning their works upon their own heads.**

**verse 32** This spiritual deterioration of the people in the “fourth generation” from the time of Christ’s manifesting himself to the Nephites had also been prophesied of previously by a few Book of Mormon prophets including Nephi (1 Nephi 12:12; 2 Nephi 26:9), Alma (Alma 45:12), and Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 13:10). This fourth generation will live after the period of righteousness. They will emerge following the so-called mini-millennium, which will follow the Savior’s visit to the Nephites.

**“for they are led away captive by him even as was the son of perdition”**

The “him” in this phrase is likely Satan himself. But, who, then, is the “son of perdition”? The setting of the verse calls to mind Judas Iscariot. Did Judas’s despicable acts qualify him to become a son of perdition? It would seem that most of the brethren think he probably did not, as he did not possess sufficient light so as to qualify him to commit the unpardonable sin. These include President Joseph F. Smith (*Gospel Doctrine*, 20, 433) and Elder Bruce R. McConkie (*Mortal Messiah*, 4:112-13, 198, 202). Perhaps, then, the expression “son of perdition” refers to Satan, rendering the meaning of this phrase: “for they are led away captive by him even as he himself was led away captive.”

**33 And it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings he said unto his disciples: Enter ye in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad**

the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein, until the night cometh, wherein no man can work.

**verse 33** “Enter ye in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein” We have considered this phrase previously (see 3 Nephi 14:13-14; Matthew 7:13-14). For the meaning of the word *strait*, see the commentary for 1 Nephi 8:20.

For a discussion of why the word *strait* (rather than *straight*) is appropriate in this verse, see the supplemental article *Strait and Straight in the Book of Mormon*.

**“until the night cometh”** The “night” here is the same “night of darkness” referred to in Alma 34:33. It is not death, but rather resurrection to a lower kingdom. It is the point beyond which no repentance is possible.

## 3 Nephi Chapter 28

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### Scripture Mastery

**3 Nephi 28** The Three Nephites are allowed to tarry .

Prior to studying 3 Nephi 28, the reader may wish to read a discussion of the phenomenon of translation in *Doctrine of Translation*, volume 2, chapter 17 in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

The story of how Joseph Smith came to learn about the doctrine of translation is an interesting one. As Joseph and Oliver were translating the Book of Mormon, they came to references of translated beings such as Alma and Moses in the Book of Alma and the three Nephites in 3 Nephi. The apostle John was also mentioned. Joseph and Oliver had occasion to discuss this ancient apostle. Perhaps discussion between the two of them was also stimulated by one of the most frequently misunderstood passages in all the scripture, John 21:20-23, in which the resurrected Lord implies in a discussion with Peter that his beloved apostle John will not taste of death but instead will be translated. This passage of scripture has been debated for centuries among Christian sects with some scholars saying that he indeed died and was buried at Ephesus, while others believe he still walks the earth. A third school of thought states that even though he was buried at Ephesus, he is not really dead but simply sleeps in the grave until the second coming of the Savior. A difference of opinion arose between Joseph and Oliver as to whether John did or did not actually die. Oliver felt that he did die, and Joseph held that he did not. In order to resolve this question, Joseph inquired of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim and received magnificent revelation which is now section 7 of our Doctrine and Covenants.

In receiving section 7, Joseph had splashed onto his consciousness an actual parchment, handwritten by John himself. Joseph did not actually have possession of the parchment, but rather, through the process of revelation he discerned the parchment and was given the translation of it. Joseph learned that John did not die but was translated:

And the Lord said unto me: John, my beloved, what desirest thou? For if you shall ask what you will, it shall be granted unto you. And I said unto him: Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee. And the Lord said unto me: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desirest this thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people. And for this cause the Lord said unto Peter: If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? For he desired of me that he might bring souls unto me, but thou desirest that thou mightest speedily come unto me in my kingdom. I say unto thee, Peter, this was a good desire; but my beloved has desired that he might do more, or a greater work yet

among men than what he has before done. Yea, he has undertaken a greater work; therefore I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel; he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth. And I will make thee to minister for him and for thy brother James; and unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come. Verily I say unto you, ye shall both have according to your desires, for ye both joy in that which ye have desired (D&C 7:1-8).

It is interesting to note the similarities between this conversation involving John and Jesus and the conversation the Savior had with the three Nephite apostles who also wished to “tarry” (3 Nephi 28:1, 4-7).

**1 And it came to pass when Jesus had said these words, he spake unto his disciples, one by one, saying unto them: What is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father?**

**verse 1** It “boggles” the mind to consider the prospect of having the Son of God grant unto an individual whatever he might desire. Certainly, the true condition of one’s heart would be revealed by the gift or blessing requested. Surely, the Savior is here offering this great blessing to men whom he knew would not ask amiss. He knew the desires of these twelve even before they expressed it.

**2 And they all spake, save it were three, saying: We desire that after we have lived unto the age of man, that our ministry, wherein thou hast called us, may have an end, that we may speedily come unto thee in thy kingdom.**

**3 And he said unto them: Blessed are ye because ye desired this thing of me; therefore, after that ye are seventy and two years old ye shall come unto me in my kingdom; and with me ye shall find rest.**

**verse 3** “ye shall come unto me in my kingdom; and with me ye shall find rest” For a discussion of the “rest” of the Lord, see the commentary for 2 Nephi 21:10. Here the “rest” of the Lord is exaltation in the celestial heaven.

The request of the nine to come immediately into the heavenly kingdom of God at death is the same as Peter’s in the New Testament and is a worthy and proper one, but we will learn that there is an even “greater work” or greater request they might have made (see verse 7).

**4 And when he had spoken unto them, he turned himself unto the three, and said unto them: What will ye that I should do unto you, when I am gone unto the Father?**

**5 And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired.**

**verse 5** “they sorrowed in their hearts” Perhaps they worried the Lord might perceive their request as being self-serving or overly ambitious. Or, perhaps, they felt



their request to continue their work on the earth rather than return directly to his presence might offend him.

**6 And he said unto them: Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me.**

**verse 6** “ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved . . . desired of me” Here we learn that John the beloved apostle of Jesus in the Old World was translated. Though this event is ignored or denied by the orthodox Christian world today, there is ancient documentary evidence it did occur (see the chapter *Doctrine of Translation* referenced above).

“**lifted up**” This phrase, of course, means crucified or lifted up onto a cross.

**7 Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven.**

**verse 7** The three Nephite apostles desired to be translated, and they were granted their wish.

“**for ye shall never taste of death**” It is unclear which “transition” or death is being referred to here by the Savior. Is he speaking of the transition from the mortal body to the translated body? Or is he referring to the passage from the translated state to the resurrected celestial eternal body? A careful reading of verse 7 itself suggests it is referring to the former. Verse 8, however, refers to the transition from the translated state to the resurrected state.

While no one will actually escape the process of death (“as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”—1 Corinthians 15:22) , this verse and the following verse promise that the death or deaths of the individual called to this great service will be painless—they will not “taste” death.

**8 And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father.**

**9 And again, ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow save it be for the sins of the world; and all this will I do because of the thing which ye have desired of me, for ye have desired that ye might bring the souls of men unto me, while the world shall stand.**

**10 And for this cause ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given**

**me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one;**

**verse 10** The eventual fate of a translated being is described. They “shall have a fulness of joy; and . . . sit down in the kingdom of my Father . . . and ye shall be even as I am.”

“**and the Father and I are one**” Elohim and Jehovah—though separate personages—are infinitely more *one* than they are separate. In a way perfectly analogous, the whole plan of salvation centers in our learning to be one with Christ as he is one with the Father.

**11 And the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children of men, because of me.**

**verse 11** “**and the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children of men, because of me**” The meaning of this phrase is not entirely clear. Perhaps it indicates that the primary purpose of the Holy Ghost in the lives of men is to bear record of the Savior. Or, perhaps it means that because of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice and death, the Father is allowed to provide to the sons of men more of the influence of the Holy Ghost than that for which they would otherwise be qualified.

**12 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three who were to tarry, and then he departed.**

**verse 12** The text does not make it clear why the Savior touched each of the nine and did not touch the three who wished to tarry. It is obvious, however, that their ministries would be different.

**13 And behold, the heavens were opened, and they were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things.**

**14 And it was forbidden them that they should utter; neither was it given unto them power that they could utter the things which they saw and heard;**

**verses 13-14** The *theys* in these verses apparently refer to the three Nephite disciples who elected translation. We do not know exactly what “orientation” the three Nephites received here, but it seems clear that translated beings have knowledge given them that exceeds the mortal perspective.

**15 And whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could not tell; for it did seem unto them like a transfiguration of them, that they were changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state, that they could behold the things of God.**

**verse 15** “it did seem unto them like a transfiguration of them” To be *transfigured* is to be lifted spiritually to a higher plane (see Moses 1:11, 14; Matthew 17:2; D&C 63:20-21). Mormon uses the word *transfiguration* to describe the condition of the three Nephites while beholding the glorious things of God. The scriptures are not clear on the exact differences between transfigured beings and translated beings. However, the scriptural use of these terms seems to indicate that transfiguration is more temporary, occurring primarily to permit one to behold spiritual things that would not be tolerated in the mortal condition. Translated beings experience a long-term change that culminates at the time of their resurrection. Probably, these Nephite disciples were first transfigured and then later translated.

“for it did seem . . . that they were changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state” We know they were not changed permanently into an immortal state at this particular time, but remained subject to death, though theirs would be a painless death.

**verses 13-15** These verses describe an experience of the three Nephite apostles who wished to tarry. This experience was similar to one had by the apostle Paul: “I knew a man in Christ [he is speaking modestly of himself] above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man [again, speaking of himself], (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

Elder Franklin D. Richards, writing of the three Nephite disciples, offered the following fascinating observation:

They wanted to tarry until Jesus came, and that they might, he took them into the heavens and endowed them with the power of translation, probably in one of Enoch’s temples, and brought them back to the earth. Thus they received power to live until the coming of the Son of Man. I believe he took them to Enoch’s city and gave them their endowments there. I expect that in the city of Enoch there are temples; and when Enoch and his people come back, they will come back with their city, their temples, blessings, and powers (JD, 25:236-37).

**16** But it came to pass that they did again minister upon the face of the earth; nevertheless they did not minister of the things which they had heard and seen, because of the commandment which was given them in heaven.

**verse 16** While in the special state, and special place, spoken of in the previous verse, they received special instructions. Their ministries were to be different than those of their nine brethren, but they were not to share all they had learned in heaven.

**17 And now, whether they were mortal or immortal, from the day of their transfiguration, I know not;**

**verse 17** Mormon editorializes. Were the three actually translated during the experience described in verse 15, or were they to be translated at some later point in time? The following verses suggest the former possibility. Some time after writing this account, Mormon will enquire further of the Lord and provide us with additional information of the state of these three Nephites (see verses 36-40).

**18 But this much I know, according to the record which hath been given—they did go forth upon the face of the land, and did minister unto all the people, uniting as many to the church as would believe in their preaching; baptizing them, and as many as were baptized did receive the Holy Ghost.**

**verse 18** We learn an important lesson from this verse. While the three Nephite disciples may have had a special mission, their fundamental calling is the same as all the missionaries of the Church—to preach repentance and baptism, and thus assist in the gathering of Israel.

**19 And they were cast into prison by them who did not belong to the church. And the prisons could not hold them, for they were rent in twain.**

**20 And they were cast down into the earth; but they did smite the earth with the word of God, insomuch that by his power they were delivered out of the depths of the earth; and therefore they could not dig pits sufficient to hold them.**

**21 And thrice they were cast into a furnace and received no harm.**

**22 And twice were they cast into a den of wild beasts; and behold they did play with the beasts as a child with a suckling lamb, and received no harm.**

**23 And it came to pass that thus they did go forth among all the people of Nephi, and did preach the gospel of Christ unto all people upon the face of the land; and they were converted unto the Lord, and were united unto the church of Christ, and thus the people of that generation were blessed, according to the word of Jesus.**

**verse 23** “and they were converted unto the Lord” We will learn that eventually all of the Nephite people were converted and united in the Church (4 Nephi 1:2).

**24 And now I, Mormon, make an end of speaking concerning these things for a time.**

**25 Behold, I was about to write the names of those who were never to taste of death, but the Lord forbade; therefore I write them not, for they are hid from the world.**

**verse 25** We do have the names of the twelve Nephite disciples (see 3 Nephi 19:4), but as to the identity of the specific three, the Lord has yet to make them known.

**26 But behold, I have seen them, and they have ministered unto me.**

**verse 26** More than three centuries later, Mormon and also his son Moroni will see and be ministered to by the three translated Nephite apostles (Mormon 8:10-11).

**27 And behold they will be among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles shall know them not.**

**verse 27** Mormon prophesies that the three will minister in our dispensation—among the Gentiles of the great Gentile nation—and we won't recognize them for who they are. In their callings, they can apparently go and come as they are asked and as they wish. We will learn in the following verses that they will eventually minister among all the scattered tribes of Israel.

**28 They will also be among the Jews, and the Jews shall know them not.**

**29 And it shall come to pass, when the Lord seeth fit in his wisdom that they shall minister unto all the scattered tribes of Israel, and unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, and shall bring out of them unto Jesus many souls, that their desire may be fulfilled, and also because of the convincing power of God which is in them.**

**verse 29** In all, there are five groups to whom the three translated Nephite disciples were to minister: (1) their own people the Nephites and Lamanites; (2) the Jews (verse 28); (3) the Gentiles (verse 27); (4) the scattered tribes of Israel; and (5) to all nations, kindred, tongues, and peoples.

**30 And they are as the angels of God, and if they shall pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus they can show themselves unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good.**

**31 Therefore, great and marvelous works shall be wrought by them, before the great and coming day when all people must surely stand before the judgment-seat of Christ;**

**32 Yea even among the Gentiles shall there be a great and marvelous work wrought by them, before that judgment day.**

**33 And if ye had all the scriptures which give an account of all the marvelous works of Christ, ye would, according to the words of Christ, know that these things must surely come.**

**verse 33** Here, Mormon refers to the “great and marvelous work” to be done among the Gentiles, the restoration of the gospel in this final dispensation.

34 And wo be unto him that will not hearken unto the words of Jesus, and also to them whom he hath chosen and sent among them; for whoso receiveth not the words of Jesus and the words of those whom he hath sent receiveth not him; and therefore he will not receive them at the last day;

35 And it would be better for them if they had not been born. For do ye suppose that ye can get rid of the justice of an offended God, who hath been trampled under feet of men, that thereby salvation might come?

**verse 35** “And it would be better for them if they had not been born”

Perhaps Mormon is guilty here of using a bit of hyperbole.

**verses 34-35** These two verses contain a sobering warning. We are first reminded that the “words of Jesus” are brought to us in part by “them whom he hath chosen and sent among [us].” It is an offense to God when we refuse to receive the words of the fifteen apostles whom he has called to lead us.

36 And now behold, as I spake concerning those whom the Lord hath chosen, yea, even three who were caught up into the heavens, that I knew not whether they were cleansed from mortality to immortality—

**verse 36** Mormon refers back to his statement in verse 17.

37 But behold, since I wrote, I have inquired of the Lord, and he hath made it manifest unto me that there must needs be a change wrought upon their bodies, or else it needs be that they must taste of death;

38 Therefore, that they might not taste of death there was a change wrought upon their bodies, that they might not suffer pain nor sorrow save it were for the sins of the world.

39 Now this change was not equal to that which shall take place at the last day; but there was a change wrought upon them, insomuch that Satan could have no power over them, that he could not tempt them; and they were sanctified in the flesh, that they were holy, and that the powers of the earth could not hold them.

**verse 39** “this change was not equal to that which shall take place at the last day” The translated “terrestrial” body is not the same as a resurrected, immortal body.

40 And in this state they were to remain until the judgment day of Christ; and at that day they were to receive a greater change, and to be received into the kingdom of the Father to go no more out, but to dwell with God eternally in the heavens.

**verse 40** Won't it be a blessed day when and if we ourselves are in the celestial kingdom “to go no more out!”

## 3 Nephi Chapter 29

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**1 And now behold, I say unto you that when the Lord shall see fit, in his wisdom, that these sayings shall come unto the Gentiles according to his word, then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel, concerning their restoration to the lands of their inheritance, is already beginning to be fulfilled.**

**verse 1** Again, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon (“these sayings”) is a sign that the great final gathering is beginning and that his second coming is nigh (see verse 2; see also 3 Nephi 21:1-7; Ether 4:17).

**2 And ye may know that the words of the Lord, which have been spoken by the holy prophets, shall all be fulfilled; and ye need not say that the Lord delays his coming unto the children of Israel.**

**3 And ye need not imagine in your hearts that the words which have been spoken are vain, for behold, the Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel.**

**4 And when ye shall see these sayings coming forth among you, then ye need not any longer spurn at the doings of the Lord, for the sword of his justice is in his right hand; and behold, at that day, if ye shall spurn at his doings he will cause that it shall soon overtake you.**

**verse 4** Mormon is obviously writing to, and warning, the people of our dispensation. The Book of Mormon must obviously be taken most seriously, as it is the Lord’s solemn warning to our dispensation.

To *spurn* is to manifest disdain in rejecting any thing.

**5 Wo unto him that spurneth at the doings of the Lord; yea, wo unto him that shall deny the Christ and his works!**

**verse 5** “Spurneth at” is a colorful verb form which obviously means to reject, scorn, or treat contemptuously.

The reader may notice the example of synonymous parallelism contained in this verse (see the supplemental article, *The Hebrew Language and the Book of Mormon*):

Wo unto him that spurneth at the doings of the Lord

Wo unto him that shall deny the Christ and his works!

**6 Yea, wo unto him that shall deny the revelations of the Lord, and that shall say the Lord no longer worketh by revelation, or by prophecy, or by gifts, or by tongues, or by healings, or by the power of the Holy Ghost!**



**verse 6** One cannot help but be reminded of the so-called orthodox Christians in the world today. Generally speaking, they believe the canon of scripture is closed and includes only the Bible. They believe the sixty-six books of the Bible contain all the truths necessary to bring individuals to salvation and enable them to live godly lives. During the time of the Reformation, when the Reformers were struggling against the claims of authority in the Roman Catholic Church, they often used the terms sola scriptura (“the scriptures alone”) and ad fontes (“to the sources”). The first term was shorthand for the doctrine that the scriptures alone, God’s written word, were authoritative for the declaration and definition of doctrine. The second was directed to Christians wanting to understand the gospel. They should turn back from all other potential sources of doctrine to the scriptures—the only real sources of doctrine.

**7 Yea, and wo unto him that shall say at that day, to get gain, that there can be no miracle wrought by Jesus Christ; for he that doeth this shall become like unto the son of perdition, for whom there was no mercy, according to the word of Christ!**

**verse 7 “to get gain”** These are the preachers guilty of the sin of “priestcraft.” If a man represents himself as a priesthood or church leader, yet his primary motive is personal popularity, power, or financial gain rather than the selfless serving of his fellow man, then he is guilty of practicing priestcrafts or priestcraft.

Here, again, the term “son of perdition” seems to refer to Judas Iscariot (see the commentary for 3 Nephi 27:32).

**8 Yea, and ye need not any longer hiss, nor spurn, nor make game of the Jews, nor any of the remnant of the house of Israel; for behold, the Lord remembereth his covenant unto them, and he will do unto them according to that which he hath sworn.**

**verse 8** The word “hiss” is used in the scriptures with two quite different meanings. Here the word is used in its pejorative or negative sense. It means to express disapproval by hissing and even carries with it the spirit of persecution.

It is also used negatively in the expression “hiss and a by-word.” This colorful expression is found in none other scripture than the Book of Mormon where it is found 3 Nephi 16:9 and 1 Nephi 19:14. In these verses the word “hiss” is used as a noun and means something like “someone or some thing spoken of in disapproving terms.” A “by-word” or “byword” is, in this context, a person or thing known for contemptible qualities.

The word “hiss” may also have a positive meaning in that it is used to mean to signal to or call or notify (see 2 Nephi 15:26; Isaiah 5:26; 7:18; Zechariah 10:8; Moroni 10:28).

**9 Therefore ye need not suppose that ye can turn the right hand of the Lord unto the left, that he may not execute judgment unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the house of Israel.**

**verse 9** This verse is reminiscent of the profound truth revealed to the prophet Joseph Smith when he was in Liberty Jail: “How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints” (D&C 121:33).

The colorful phrase “turn the right hand of the Lord unto the left” obviously means to thwart the Lord in his purposes.

### 3 Nephi Chapter 30

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1 Hearken, O ye Gentiles, and hear the words of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, which he hath commanded me that I should speak concerning you, for, behold he commandeth me that I should write, saying:

2 Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent of your evil doings, of your lyings and deceivings, and of your whoredoms, and of your secret abominations, and your idolatries, and of your murders, and your priestcrafts, and your envyings, and your strifes, and from all your wickedness and abominations, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, that ye may be numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel.

**verses 1-2** Even though the gospel in the latter days will be restored and promulgated by the “Gentiles”—those citizens of the great Gentile nation—the prophecies have been clear that there will be a major apostasy of Gentiles in the latter days. This apostasy will involve Gentiles outside of the Church, and, unfortunately, some inside his Church as well (see the commentary for 3 Nephi 16:15). By commandment from the Lord the prophet Nephi (or perhaps Mormon) delivers, through the Book of Mormon, an invitation to this generation of Gentiles to come unto him, be baptized, and be numbered among his people.

The reader should note the frequent use of the possessive pronoun “your” in this verse (it is used twelve times). In lists, the Hebrew language repeats the possessive pronoun (e.g., *their, our, your, thy, his, her*) before each of the nouns to which it refers, a convention that is uncommon in English usage. The Old Testament preserves many examples of this Hebrew usage. For instance, the pronoun *our* is used six times in the KJV of Exodus 10:9: “And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD.” Other biblical examples include the repetition of *our* five times in Deuteronomy 26:7, *their* four times in Genesis 10:20, *your* five times in Exodus 12:11, *your* four times in Leviticus 26:30, and *our* six times in Nehemiah 9:32.

This particular verse in the Book of Mormon is an excellent example of this Hebrew usage. Other examples of the repeated possessive pronoun in the Book of Mormon include *your* four times in Mosiah 4:30, *their* eight times in Mosiah 11:3, *your* three times in Alma 32:42, *our* nine times in Alma 44:5, and *thy* four times in Alma 38:3.