

## 2 NEPHI 26–30

John W. Welch Notes



### 2 Nephi 26

In overview, beginning in 2 Nephi 25, Nephi spoke “somewhat concerning the words which I have written, which have been spoken by the mouth of Isaiah” (25:1). That set of interpretive sayings continues on until the end of chapter 30. I imagine that Nephi wrote these words midway through his reign as king in the city of Nephi. These chapters would have reassured Nephi’s people that, even though they would live in isolation and even though they knew that their posterity would not last, their efforts would not be in vain or unimportant. The Lord would come to them (ch. 26), they would leave a record that would come forth miraculously (ch. 27), and even though the devil would seek in many ways to impede the progress of that book (ch. 28), it will figure prominently in the last days (ch. 29), when many covenant people shall be restored with rejoicing unto the blessings of the Lord (ch. 30). At that point Nephi says, “And now, my beloved brethren, I make an end of my sayings” (30:18). And thus, these chapters should rightly be read as a textual unit.

#### **2 Nephi 26:1 — The Law Fulfilled after Christ’s Resurrection**

It is apparent in verse 1 of chapter 26 that Nephi clearly understood that in the future, when Jesus would come to the people in the Americas following his resurrection, he would fulfill the Law of Moses and issue a new law which would then take the place of the Law of Moses. Until then, he instructs the people of Nephi to be strict in observing the Law of Moses. This verse picks up seamlessly as a continuation of Nephi’s statement in the final verse of Nephi’s previous chapter: “And, inasmuch as it shall be expedient,

ye must keep the performances and ordinances of God until the law shall be fulfilled which was given unto Moses" (25:30).

## 2 Nephi 26:4–6 — The Wicked Destroyed

In verse 4, Nephi identified those among his people who will be destroyed, namely the proud and those who do wickedly. In this summation, Nephi captures one of the main themes in the long block of Isaiah chapters that he has just quoted. The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, prophesied over and over again about pride being the great pitfall of the people living in the land of Jerusalem during his time. Isaiah also prophesied that pride would be the great pitfall for those of us living in the latter days.

Nephi elaborated in verse 5: "They that kill the prophets, and the saints, the depths of the earth shall swallow them up, . . . and mountains shall cover them, and whirlwinds shall carry them away, and buildings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder." This statement of the divine punishment of those who kill the prophets compares with Nephi's previous prophecies (see 1 Nephi 12:4 and 19:10–18) about the types of calamities that would eventually befall the lands of the Nephites and Lamanites in the New World at the time of Christ's death. These things can be related to the catastrophes that took place in 3 Nephi 8–9. People were specifically warned by Nephi, several hundred years before those events occurred, about the thunderings, lightnings, earthquakes, and all manner of destruction that would take place.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[How Does Prophecy Shape the Book of Mormon's Content and Structure?](#) (Words of Mormon 1:4)," *KnoWhy* 498 (January 15, 2019).

## 2 Nephi 26:7 — Nephi Anguishes for His Posterity

Look at verse 7: "O the pain, and the anguish of my soul for the loss of the slain of my people!" Can you imagine Nephi's feelings as he was shown the awful destruction of his own people? Nephi, undoubtedly, had hope and a desire for the best for his posterity. Don't we all wish for the best for our children, our grandchildren, and our posterity? Nephi knew that there would be many good things that would happen in the lives of his posterity. Christ would even come to them. But Nephi also knew that they would be destroyed—and what pain and anguish that must have made him feel. We all can relate with Nephi. However, in spite of that inexpressible agony, what was Nephi's response at the end of this verse? Did he curse God and object to what will happen? No. He said, "I *must* cry unto my God: thy ways are just." What a lesson we can learn from Nephi on how we can regroup and respond to calamities and problems, many of which are happening today in the world.

## 2 Nephi 26:9 — Christ Will Appear to the Faithful Nephites

Nephi saw that the righteous people who hearkened to the words of the prophet would not be destroyed. The “Son of righteousness” would appear to them, heal them, and they would have peace for three generations. This is exactly what happened in 3 Nephi 17 with the healing of the people at the time of Christ, followed by peace for three generations in 4 Nephi.

Have you thought about the impact your direct influence has over three or four generations? What is significant about three or four generations? You, through your grandchildren, are included in this span of time. Consider this: If you had been among those who had witnessed the teachings of Christ and if you had seen and felt his marvelous love, you could live to tell your children, your grandchildren, and perhaps your greatgrandchildren, about that remarkable experience. The period of three subsequent generations marks the affect we can have personally on others. Our direct influence does not reach through seven or eight generations because we aren’t around to personally know that later progeny.

The little children who were present and who personally interacted with Christ would have remembered that experience all of their lives. They were eye witnesses of the Savior and, throughout their lives, they could relate their experience to others. Therefore, for three or four generations, people who were actually there at Christ’s appearance—who were first-hand witnesses—were around to relate their personal accounts. However, after three or four generations, the opportunity for first-hand oral testimony would become lost, and people would have begun to ignore and discount the significance of what had happened. The people in 4 Nephi eventually went a different way and, when that happens, they were ripe for destruction. A century ago, a similar challenge was faced, when a generation arose that had not known Joseph Smith personally. Fortunately, intense historical efforts were made to record their recollections and experiences with the Prophet. This explains why the Church is so avid about keeping faithful historical records, and why our own personal histories should not go missing.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Did the Peace Last So Long in 4 Nephi? \(4 Nephi 1:16\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 225 (November 7, 2016).

## 2 Nephi 26:24 — Jesus Does Nothing Unless It Is for Our Benefit

Verse 24 tells us something about Jesus: “He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world.” What a statement! That is an absolute statement—*everything* Jesus does is

for the benefit of the world. If you are striving to be Christ-like, you may want to look at your life and ask, “Do I do nothing except for the benefit of the world?” That is a challenge.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why the Book of Mormon’s Depiction of a Loving God Fits with the Old Testament \(2 Nephi 26:24\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 422 (April 5, 2018).

## 2 Nephi 26:27 — We Are Commanded to Help Others Repent

Christ commands all people that they “should persuade all men to repent.” We assist Christ in His work when we get people to repent—it is a Christ-like effort. In a [BYU Devotional](#), I once stated that there is no intellectual challenge greater than figuring out what you can say and what you can do to help someone else repent. This intellectual challenge is greater than learning the laws of astrophysics, molecular biology, or any other complex academic pursuit.

But this is what Bishops often do—somebody walks into your office who needs help, direction, and assistance in the process of repentance. One of the scariest moments of my life occurred two or three weeks after I had been ordained and sustained as a bishop. I realized that these faithful people who sat in my office for a fifteen-minute interview would actually go out and do what I advised them to do. I realized that I had to do my best to be right! I was asked many questions about many things, but the most important advice sought was how to fix their life and how to repent. It is quite a challenge. How do you respond? How do you do it? Try to figure out how Christ would respond. What would He advise or do in this situation? This is a quintessential Christ-like endeavor. And we are all charged to go and do likewise, to preach nothing—directly or indirectly—except repentance, reproof betimes with sharpness but showing forth an increase of love (D&C 121:43; see also Leviticus 19:17).

## 2 Nephi 26:29 — We Are Commanded to Avoid Priestcraft

The Lord has also commanded that there shall be no priestcrafts, “[F]or, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.” We need to scrupulously avoid the behavior described in this verse. Fortunately, we are blessed with a structure of Church leadership, from the ward level all the way to the top, where we do not have the opportunity for this kind of priestcraft. This is a great blessing to members of the Church of Jesus Christ in our day.

## **2 Nephi 26:31 — What Does Nephi Mean When He Says We Cannot Labor for Money?**

This scripture is not a blanket statement that implies we should not work. The scripture specifies that “the laborer in Zion” should not work for money, meaning you should not be paid when you are doing service for the Church. We don’t get paid when we minister to others. In some churches, however, ministers are paid—it is a job. The concern expressed in verse 31 is turning the holy service of the priesthood into a commercial activity. Another interpretation of this scripture might be a warning not to let your job become so all-consuming that you become obsessed with money. That would also be a problem.

## **2 Nephi 26:25, 33 — All Are Alike unto God**

Verse 33 talks about Christ-like love. “And he inviteth all to come unto him ... and he denieth none that come unto him.” A Christ-like person invites all people into his or her life. The statement is followed by an inclusive list of people we need to love and invite into our lives: black and white, bond and free, male and female, the righteous and the heathen. “All are alike unto God, both Jew and gentile.” This is a Christ-like attitude about humanity because we truly are all alike. We are all children of the same Heavenly Father, and we are all loved by Him. We are all brothers and sisters of the same, divine brother. That makes us all alike in the ways that really matter.

The love Nephi is speaking of is a welcoming love. We should welcome all people into our personal lives and into the Kingdom of God. At the time Nephi wrote this, he knew that his posterity would be destroyed. He also knew God’s promise that there would eventually be Gentiles and others who would bring the gospel again to his people and that his posterity would be welcomed into the Church. Nephi also knew of Isaiah’s promise that the Lord’s voice goes to all people. Nephi had echoed that prophecy of Isaiah a few verses earlier in 2 Nephi 26:24: “He doth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world.”

And verse 25 further elaborates: “[D]oth he cry to any, saying: Depart from me? ... I say unto you, Nay. ... Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price.” Where did Nephi get this phrasing? It comes from Isaiah 55:1. This would appear to be the last writing in the book of Isaiah that the Nephites had. Nephi drew on many of Isaiah’s passages, including this one, as he crafted his own words to convey the prophecy that he knew would happen to his people and others. Consider what Nephi says in 2 Nephi 26:27: “Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation?” No. Rather, “[H]e hath given it free for all men,” which is substantively related to Isaiah 55:1.

And this brings us back to verse 33, which I think is a most moving conclusion. What a wonderful, universal message we have here in the Book of Mormon of the reach of Christ's Atonement to all people throughout the world. Isn't it wonderful to live at a time when this prophecy is being fulfilled, a time when people are being gathered from all parts of the world?

One may wonder about the 1978 revelation received by President Spencer W. Kimball about extending the blessings of the priesthood to all worthy males. How did that happen? *BYU Studies* published an article several years ago which was written by Edward L. Kimball who is President Kimball's son. It is a very long article, going into great detail about all the steps that were involved in receiving that revelation. It is an over-whelming experience to read and understand how the Spirit of Revelation was upon President Kimball, inspiring him to bring forth this revelation at the time, when it was proper, everything in the Lord's due time.

Recently, I had in my office a black member of the Church who graduated from Brigham Young University's law school several years ago. His name is Keith Hamilton. Keith has written a book about his thoughts from the perspective of a black member of the Church. You would probably enjoy reading his whole story. During our conversation, I asked Keith, "What do you make of the revelation about blacks receiving the priesthood?" Sharing our thoughts, we both concluded that the important thing is that the Lord blesses every people in their proper time. There was a time when the Church went primarily to the Lamanites. And, there was a time when it went primarily to the Germans in Prussia. There was a time when the Church put great emphasis on the Polynesian Islands. The Church is small. We have limited resources, and can't do everything for all people instantly. We are blessed to live at a time when many things have come together making it possible for all blessings of the priesthood to be offered to all.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "Why Are So Few Women Mentioned in the Book of Mormon? (2 Nephi 26:33)," *KnoWhy* (December 19, 2017).

Book of Mormon Central, "Why Did Nephi Say That All Are Alike Unto God? (2 Nephi 26:33)," *KnoWhy* 278 (February 22, 2017).

## 2 Nephi 27

### **2 Nephi 27:6–8 — Nephi Testifies That the Record of the Nephites Will Come Forth at a Future Time.**

Think of how disoriented and isolated Nephi must have felt. With respect to the people living in the world that Lehi and his family left, Nephi and his people were out in the middle of absolutely nowhere. As far as they knew, they were living on an island of the sea and Nephi, of course, knew that Isaiah recorded the promise that God would not forget even the people on the isles of the sea. At this point in time, Nephi and his people had likely not yet had an opportunity to explore far enough to really know how large of a land they were inhabiting.

Nephi had built a temple. He was trying to reestablish things and bring order to his people. He must have also wondered if this work would be for naught, because he also knew that there would be great wars and that his people, the Nephites, would eventually be wiped out. This must have been a most depressing vision. Nephi was undoubtedly struggling with concerns of anonymity, of annihilation, and extinction. So, when Nephi was brought to the understanding of the voice of his people speaking from the dust, it must have brought great hope.

In 2 Nephi 26:16, Nephi had first prophesied that the writings on the plates would speak from the dust, alluding to Isaiah 29. Nephi then spent a great deal of time discussing the role the plates of his people would have in gathering Israel. The whole of chapter 27 then discusses how this prophecy about his words speaking out of the dust would be fulfilled. Nephi quoted from a section in Isaiah 29 and explained how God would bring about the great and marvelous work that would come forth—the marvelous work and a wonder. Isaiah prophesied that God would not forget the people whom Isaiah was addressing. Neither would God forget Nephi and his people. Nephi understood that his posterity would have an important role to play in the history of Israel and that the record made by Nephi and his people would change the hearts of the whole house of Israel. God would keep his promises and somehow this prophecy would be fulfilled, if Nephi would only keep the records and do what he was commanded to do with the plates.

#### **Further Reading**

Book of Mormon Central, "[How Are the Words of the Book of Mormon Like 'One That Hath a Familiar Spirit'?](#) (2 Nephi 16:16)," *KnoWhy* 491 (December 16, 2018).

## 2 Nephi 27:7 — A Sealed Book

Anciently, why would a scribe have a seal? When a scribe wrote an official document (such as a legal contract, a divorce decree, or a promissory note), the scribe would bind the written record, tie it up, put a lump of clay or wax on the knot, and imprint his seal in the clay or wax to indicate that the record was an official, formal, correct document. This is how official transactions were conducted in ancient times. Notice that in 2 Nephi 27, Nephi knows that there will be a record. It will be witnessed by three witnesses, and it will be sealed, meaning that the record will not just be closed up, but that it will be preserved with seals of authority. Sealing important documents that directly affected the life of an individual was part of Nephi's world. We can learn something from the fact that the record of the Nephites was witnessed and sealed. It is important to ascertain the attestation and testimony of those who influence us in making decisions that affect our eternal life.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Would a Book Be Sealed? \(2 Nephi 27:10\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 53 (March 14, 2016).



*Figure 1 This is a cuneiform record of a lawsuit heard before Ini-Teshub, Hittite viceroy at Carchemish (about 1270–1240 BC). It is sealed with his large stamp seal. Photo by John W. Welch in Boston Museum of Fine Arts.*



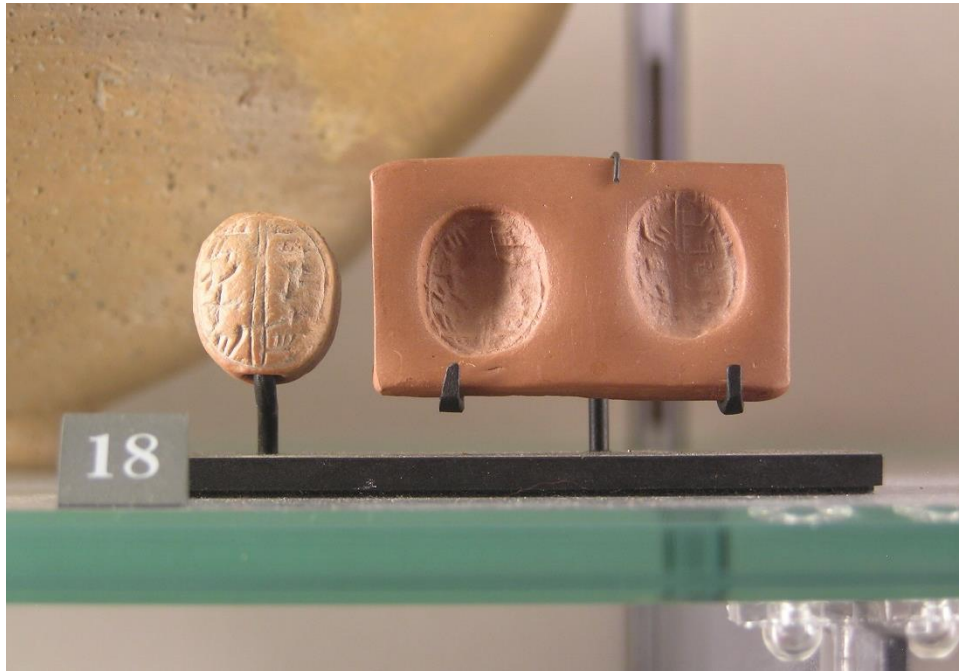


Figure 2 Example of Hebrew seal, belonging to a servant of King Hoshea, King of Judah, from the 7th–8th centuries BCE. Photograph by John W. Welch in Louvre Museum, Paris.



Figure 3 Example of Egyptian seal scarab from the 7th–8th centuries BCE. Photograph by John W. Welch.

## 2 Nephi 27:26 — What Is Significant about the Marvelous Work and a Wonder?

There are many, many ways to know that the Book of Mormon is true—hundreds of ways, I would say. Of course, they all are ultimately grounded in knowing that the Book of Mormon is true through prayer and study.

Isaiah prophesied, in chapter 29, that the Book of Mormon would come forth out of the ground and that it would be *a marvelous work and a wonder*. Following general rules of English, the King James translators, and maybe Tyndale before them, did not like repetition of the same word. The phrase “a marvelous work and a wonder” sounds better in English than “a miraculous miracle and a miracle.” Those who speak English prefer the use of synonyms because we don’t like redundancy. We strive for variation so it does not just sound like we are saying the same thing over and over again. But in many ancient languages, especially in Hebrew, using the same root over and over again was good style. When Lehi stated, “I dreamed a dream,” he was using a form that is called “cognate accusative.” What else do you dream? You might just say, “I dreamed,” and that would get the job done in English. Even though you would flunk English by using such a repetitive phrase today, the idea of repetition was a positive thing in ancient languages. It was considered to be good style.

What was Isaiah really saying in Isaiah 29? Isaiah stated that the record that would come forth was going to be a *miraculous work and a miracle*. In other words, the book would be a really big miracle—a double miracle—a miracle squared. It was not enough to simply say, “It is going to be amazing.” Isaiah wanted to express that it was going to be “miraculously amazing.”

As you go through the Book of Mormon this year, I hope you will come to see its amazing qualities in so many different ways. One of the things that makes the book miraculous is that it has so many features and qualities. In the past, I have tried to list some of these. I do not know if you have a list of your own. Many of these words end in “-ity” and some of them end with a “-y.” For example, there are things in the Book of Mormon that miraculously manifest its antiquity, and its use of cognate accusatives is one of them. The list of its amazing characteristics is long. This book manifests variety, simplicity, clarity, profundity, sagacity, objectivity, spirituality, practicality, reliability, creativity, maturity, artistry, spontaneity, specificity, generality, beauty, complexity, honesty, subtlety, familiarity, accuracy, consistency, legality, authority, universality, reality, and sanctity. I think that’s a really big miracle!

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "Why Did the Book of Mormon Come Forth as a Miracle? (2 Nephi 27:23)," *KnoWhy* 273 (February 10, 2017).

John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon: Insights You May Have Missed Before*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1991), 80–81.

## 2 Nephi 28

### 2 Nephi 28:3–6 — Many False Churches Will Rise in the Last Days

As we discuss Nephi 28, I would like you to refer to the two-page table below, which comes from my book, *Charting the Book of Mormon* (See Figure 4).

To help his readers recognize Satan's many tools and false teachings, Nephi used phrases to describe false doctrine and wrong attitudes that were applicable in his day but will also arise in most times and places. The accompanying chart (Figure 4) identifies 48 expressions found in 2 Nephi 28 and then uses or coins an "-ism" that puts a convenient label on these 48 tactics that Satan uses to try to lead people away from God. Let's look at the first few of these statements in some detail and elaborate on how they can be understood. Knowing how the Devil works and seeing his tactics in operation in the ideologies of the world helps us avoid being taken captive by him, who leads people "carefully" under his influence and powers (28:21).

Nephi warns people to be sure that what they build up is built up onto the Lord (28:3). In the modern world, people build organizations, businesses, and even churches, and most often what is "built up," is "not unto the Lord." In particular, Nephi warned people against misappropriating things for their own use that have been given to them for other purposes and are, therefore, violating a stewardship. The dangers of misappropriation are a general concern in the operations of a church as an entity, but may also be done by individuals who happen to belong to that church. They may be misappropriating talents or assets they have and are building up for purposes other than bringing people to God. The Devil is behind acts of self-aggrandizement for political, military, or other purposes, rather than building for the Lord.

Second, his strategy of what may be called "exclusivism" occurs when people claim, "I am the Lord's" (28:3). What is wrong with a person claiming, "I am the Lord's?" This statement is a problem when it manifests a sense of pride and selfish privilege to the

# The Ways of the Devil

## 2 Nephi 28:3–30

Tactic	Quotation	Verse
Misappropriation	"built up, and not unto the Lord"	3
Exclusivism	"I am the Lord's"	3
Disputation	"contend one with another"	4
Sophism	"teach with their learning"	4
Cynicism	"deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance"	4
Secularism	"deny the power of God"	5
Historicism	"the Redeemer hath done his work"	5
Empowerment	"he hath given his power unto men"	5
Skepticism	"believe it not"	6
Naturalism	"he is not a God of miracles"	6
Hedonism	"eat, drink, and be merry"	7
Fatalism	"tomorrow we die"	7
Cavalierism	"it shall be well with us"	7
Popularism	"many . . . shall say"	8
Appearances	"nevertheless, fear God"	8
Rationalizing	"justify in committing a little sin"	8
Criticism	"take the advantage of one because of his words"	8
Entrapment	"dig a pit for thy neighbor"	8
Legalism	"no harm in this"	8
Permissivism	"do all these things"	8
Leniency	"God will beat us with a few stripes"	8
Faddism	"many . . . shall teach after this manner"	9

Sensationalism	"false"	9
Egotism	"vain"	9
Imprudence	"foolish"	9
Arrogance	"puffed up in their hearts"	9
Self-Deception	"hide their counsels from the Lord"	9
Persecutionism	"blood of the saints shall cry"	10
Corruptionism	"they have become corrupted"	11
Oppressionism	"rob the poor"	13
Ostentationism	"because of their fine sanctuaries"	13
Narcissism	"their fine clothing"	13
Supremism	"persecute the meek and poor in heart"	13
Elitism	"stiff necks and high heads"	13
Immorality	"abominations and whoredoms"	14
Distortionism	"pervert the right way of the Lord"	15
Trivialism	"turn aside the just for a thing of naught"	16
Meanness	"revile against that which is good"	16
Dismissivism	"say that is of no worth"	16
Tantrumism	"rage in the hearts of the children"	20
Emotionalism	"anger against that which is good"	20
Mollifying Pacifism	"others will he pacify"	21
Materialism	"into carnal security"	21
Toadyism	"others he flattereth"	22
Relativism	"there is no hell"	22
Complacency	"wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion"	24
Secularism	"we need no more of the word of God"	29
Faithless Humanism	"putteth his trust in man"	30

Figure 1 Welch, John W., and Greg Welch. *The Ways of the Devil*. Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999, chart 79.

exclusion of others. Actually, nobody can rightly say “I am the Lord’s,” for we are *all* the Lord’s. As discussed in 2 Nephi 26:33, “all are alike unto God.”

Third on the list, Nephi saw that people would “contend one with another” (28:4). Nephi was acutely aware of the problems of living in a contentious society from his days in Jerusalem. When the boy Joseph entered the grove to pray, one of his primary concerns was what to personally make of the many dissensions between the churches of his time. He wanted to know “which of all the sects was right.” The Father and the Son addressed Joseph’s concern by recognizing that the various churches built up creeds and then contended one with another.

We most certainly live in a time of contention. Manifestations of contention are all around us. All you have to do is listen to major news outlets to observe arguing, disputation and dissension. We deceive ourselves that this is a good way of getting to the truth, especially when such discourse deteriorates into a contest to see who can shout the loudest. That is really not a good political or democratic solution. People contend and argue and it doesn’t really change much, nor does it seem to ever stop. Nephi gives us a warning: Contention is not of the Lord. It drives out the Spirit. It drives out love. And the devil knows that.

Fourth, Nephi stated that organizations and churches would “teach with their learning” (28:4). One might call this sophism. One should be on guard when those who teach are not teaching *with* the scriptures, inspiration, and the Holy Ghost.

Fifth, Nephi’s discussion of the manner of teaching was then followed by his observation that such will cynically “deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance” (28:4). As one reads the scriptures or is taught gospel truths, the Holy Ghost can “give utterance” to what is being communicated—through the power of the Holy Ghost, one can know the truth of all things.

In addition, sixth, people will “deny the power of God” (28:5). We can see plenty of this in the modern or post-modern ways of thinking. Arguments are made that feelings from the Spirit cannot be proven by science. People may say that there is no scientific way of proving the existence or intervention of God, or that the Holy Ghost won’t or can’t reveal truth to the mind. This is secularism—a belief that God is not active in the world today and that he doesn’t have the will or the power to affect things.

What does it mean to “deny?” The root word “denego” means to say “no” (“*de-negate*”). To deny means to refuse or to be negative. People will deny themselves, they will deny other people, and they will even deny that they belong to Christ. There are lots of ways to deny. You can deny something, even when you refuse to acknowledge that you are

denying it. One may say, “I do not deny that there is a living prophet on the earth today.” But, if we listen to General Conference and do not do what we are instructed to do by modern-day prophets of the Lord, we are effectively denying what we have been told to do by one who has received revelation for the Church. You may not deny that the power of God exists. But you deny the power of God when you do not allow it to work in you, when you do not give it room in your life, when you push it away. The devil wins when people deny the power of God.

Seventh, what about Nephi’s observation that people of our day will say, “the Redeemer hath done his work” (28:5)? Isaiah used the word “Redeemer” in Isaiah 49 to refer to Jehovah—the God of the Old Testament who redeemed Israel from Egypt, who had entered into a covenant with Israel, and who had given Israel the commandments and the Law. Isaiah was speaking to the people living in Jerusalem during his lifetime. They believed that God had done his work, had forsaken them, and was now irrelevant in their lives. Isaiah spoke of the Messiah’s redemptive work that was yet to come: “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”

Nephi prophesied of a similar attitude in our day: “[B]ehold, there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men. ... [I]f they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work” (28:6). These statements are forms of skepticism and naturalism.

Nephi was a person who was open to new revelations and new developments. He had seen that the Lord was, and always would be involved in the affairs of man. He knew that the Lord was a God of miracles and always would be. People today speak and behave like the Lord is a thing of the past—he did his work and now “he hath given his power unto men.” It is true that God gives his priesthood power to men. But it is still God’s power, and men holding the priesthood act in God’s name. What the prophecy is revealing is that people will say God doesn’t have power anymore. Morality is now just a matter of democracy—the majority rules. People believe that individuals, not God, decide what is right and wrong.

### **2 Nephi 28:7–9 — Nephi Warns against Seventeen More of the Devil’s Tactics**

Nephi next goes on to focus on social attitudes that lead people away from the Holy Spirit. In these three verses he expresses concerns about hedonism, fatalism, popularism, rationalizing, criticism, permissivism, leniency, imprudence, and arrogance. As you read his words, it is apparent that Nephi understood and knew the ways of the devil and that he had particular concern and worries about how these tactics would unfold. Nephi’s treatise on Satan’s tools is actually pretty amazing.

Ask yourself, “How did Nephi know that this is the way Satan works?” Nephi knew the ways of the devil because he grew up in Jerusalem at a time when the state of Jerusalem was very wicked—things were really bad. Nephi’s father was a prophet who spent his days in Jerusalem preaching repentance and trying to correct this corrupt and evil society. Nephi knew what it was like to live in a society that was ripening for destruction. How about in his own life? Nephi had challenges that arose because people—even those in his own family—objected to his teachings of the Lord. Nephi had also seen a vision. He saw the Tree of Life, but he also saw the great and spacious building and the river of filthy water. He knew the temptations that accost individuals. He also knew the meaning of all these things. Lehi saw the big picture, but Nephi asked to see these things with more specificity. This tells us something about Nephi’s personality. Nephi was in the details. Nephi was an administrator. He was a king. He was trying to run a city. He was a builder. Nephi was doing many things that Lehi was never asked to do. So, Nephi saw the urgency of the situation when he saw the specifics of Satan’s influence.

As you read, seek to be sensitized to the workings of Satan’s tools and his influence on the doctrine and philosophies of man. Once again, referring to Figure 2, consider the phrases Nephi used to describe the tactics of Satan and their practical meanings and manifestations.

When Nephi pointed out that “many . . . shall say” (28:8), he was describing a type of populism—whatever the majority agrees upon can’t be all that bad or whoever yells the loudest must be right. This is always problematic. Long ago, Exodus 23:2 commanded, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.”

According to Nephi, the wicked will continue in outward and inward acts of sin, but will say, “nevertheless, fear God” (28:8). Here Nephi is warning that, even though the wicked don’t really believe in God, they go through the appearances of being righteous. The sinner desires to save face and appear to be good to those in society who continue to hold onto standards of moral behavior. The wicked want to continue in immoral behavior while also feigning that what they are doing is good for themselves as well as good for society.

Nephi prophesied that in the last days, sinners’ attitudes would be reflected in the following statements: “[God] will justify in committing a little sin”; “God will beat us with a few stripes”; and “at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God” (28:8). This is justification and rationalization in committing sin, and should be averted. Attitudes of leniency and a philosophy of freedom *from* responsibility are reflected in these statements. We all desire freedom, and we all appreciate the gift of agency. However,



part of personal freedom and agency requires personal responsibility and accountability for the consequences of our choices. We can choose, but we cannot choose the consequences for the choices we make. To believe that we will somehow be saved in the kingdom of God in our sinful state is self-deception.

Isaiah, like Nephi, also described a society that would tolerate and even encourage people who lay traps to ensnare others and ruin their reputations and livelihoods, a society that is willing to ignore the enormous negativity that results from this type of contentious behavior. To do this, one has to participate in deception, criticism, cold-heartedness, and persecution. One has to rely on others believing or accepting the lies, perhaps by justifying that “everyone does it.” This is the atmosphere described by Nephi with the phrases, “lie a little,” “take advantage of one because of his words,” and “dig a pit for thy neighbor.”

Continuing on, Nephi warns that, in order to sound reasonable and intelligent while, at the same time, attempting to gain acceptance for ignoring and even promoting sinful behavior, some sinners may take a sort of legalist approach to sin. The reasoning that if there is no legally enforceable damage, then it can’t be a problem, assumes too much about the goodness and completeness of public law.

How can someone get away with teaching false, vain, and foolish doctrines (28:9)? How is outright lying even possible? False, foolish, and imprudent statements and behavior can be accepted in a society that accepts the philosophy of moral relativism where what is true and what is wrong is determined exclusively by the individual—not with any consideration for God or for one’s duties to society.

And so Nephi’s long list of the ways of the Devil continues with many more examples that are revealing and arresting. In general, these tactics ignore the fact, or even the possibility, that there is truth and that there are falsehoods, or that certain behaviors are moral and other behaviors are not, or that some things are just flat-out wrong.

From Nephi’s list, it is apparent that Satan has a lot of tools in his bag.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[How Does the Devil Lead Us Astray?](#) (2 Nephi 28:21),” *KnoWhy* 55 (March 16, 2016).

## 2 Nephi 28:19–30 — The Devil Will Rage in the Hearts of Men

At the end of chapter 28, things get really dark. There are seven woes here (28:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32), and one curse (28:1). Nephi knew, from the vision he received and recorded in 1 Nephi 13–14, that after the day of the Gentile, after the efforts to convert all

people, and after the efforts to convince Jews that Jesus is the Christ, there would be the great, apocalyptic showdown and there would be forces of evil at home and abroad in the world. At this time in history, Nephi affirms, there will basically be only two choices: follow God or follow the ways of Satan. It's like Lehi's dream, with the Tree of Life on one side and the great and spacious building on the other side. Eventually, we are all going to have to be on one side of that divide or the other. Either that, or we are going to be lost in the mists of outer darkness. This is where Nephi returned to the Tree of Life theme, but here he extensively elaborated upon this dark part of Lehi's dream and applied it unto his own people as well as to the world in the latter days, the world that we know.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Are There Really Only Two Churches?](#) (1 Nephi 14:10)," *KnoWhy* 16 (January 21, 2016).

## 2 Nephi 29–30

### 2 Nephi 30:5–6 — Lehi's Posterity Receive the Gospel

But just as Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 14, and just as Isaiah's prophecies in 2 Nephi 23 and 24 all end in the victory of God, Nephi concludes his exposition of Isaiah's revelations on a set of very promising notes. After writing with assurance that the Lord will preserve the testimonies of "two nations . . . that I am God" (29:8), and that he will also "speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it" (29:12), Nephi prophesied that after many years, the seed of Lehi's posterity will receive the gospel again (30:5). Nephi used a metaphor to describe the moral state of people before they receive the gospel—they have *scales* of darkness, like fish scales, over their eyes (30:6).

Take a careful look at verse 6. Nephi specified two things that must precede the falling of the scales of darkness from one's eyes. First, the person must "rejoice" (receive the gospel with gladness) and second, the person must "know [that the knowledge of the gospel] is a blessing unto them from the hand of God."

### 2 Nephi 30:10–14 — Nephi Testifies of the Victory of the Lord

At the end of chapter 30, Nephi testified of the eventual victory of the Lord. Nephi explained that evil would be overcome. In verse 10 we see that this is done by the Lord causing a great division among the people, with the wicked destroyed and His people spared. In verse 11, Nephi stated that "righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." In verse 12, Nephi described a time of peace where

gentle docile animals would lie down with beasts—lamb and wolf, kid and leopard, calf and lion. Does this sound familiar? Where did Nephi get this imagery? These descriptions come from Isaiah 14 (quoted by Nephi in 2 Nephi 24). It is apparent that all of Nephi’s words beginning in 2 Nephi 26 and running to the end of chapter 30, make strong use of the words of Isaiah—material from the Brass Plates that Nephi and his brothers brought out of Jerusalem at great risk and sacrifice.

### **2 Nephi 30:17–18 — All Secret Things Will Be Revealed**

Finally, after speaking about the millennial condition, Nephi said, “There is nothing which is secret save it shall be revealed.” Every work of darkness will “be made manifest in the light.” Does this change the way you live—knowing that everything you say and do is going to be revealed?

I think that if you repent, your wrongdoings will be erased from the disc, so that when the events of your life are played, the things that you have repented of will be just a blip. We are going to have all eternity, and what is one thing we will do? Maybe we are going to watch everybody’s home movies. We’re going to see everybody’s life replayed so that we can learn from one another and laugh with each other. “Oh, you had that problem too?” This scripture informs us that everything we do will be shouted from the rooftops for all to see and to hear.

The Lord says that when we repent, “I, the Lord, remember [the sin] no more.” In some miraculous way, repentance provides an omniscient God who knows everything to forget something. Now how can that happen? I don’t know, but it does.

But for the unrepented parts of our lives, I think the reality spelled out in verses 17 and 18 can be a big motivator for us: everything will eventually be manifest. Sometimes we sweep things under the rug and ignore them. We think nobody will ever know. However, if we’re going to have integrity, if we’re going to be pure, if we are really going to have the kind of love and respect for God that it will take to regain his holy presence, we must recognize that everything secret will be revealed—all cards will be on the table. Nephi leaves us with this warning as an important thing for all to keep in mind every day.