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## Nephi's Message to the "Gentiles"

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## NEPHI'S MESSAGE TO THE "GENTILES"

*S. Michael Wilcox*

*And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that  
Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself  
unto all nations. (Book of Mormon, title page)*

Chapters 25 through 33 of 2 Nephi contain Nephi's final messages. They had a profound influence on later Book of Mormon prophets and have great relevancy today. Nephi addresses his comments to three main groups of people: the Jews, the descendants of Lehi, and the Gentiles. His commentary can be read as a unified discourse that serves as his final testimony; much of it contains an explanation of the Isaiah chapters he has just quoted. There is a logic and organization that flows from chapter to chapter. In this paper I will not attempt to deal with the entire message in detail but will isolate Nephi's teachings to and about the Gentiles in the overall context of the broader discourse. I will focus primarily on chapters 26 and 27. In order to do this I will first give a brief chapter-by-chapter summary of Nephi's major points.

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## NEPHI'S ORGANIZATION

*Chapter 25.* Nephi speaks primarily of the Jews who will eventually reject the gospel and the Savior and will slip into the darkness of apostasy. Verses 23 through 30 contain a message to Nephi's own seed relative to their acceptance of the Savior.

*Chapter 26:1–22.* Nephi speaks of Lehi's descendants and the Gentiles. They too will eventually reject the gospel and the Savior and will go into apostasy.

*Chapter 26:23–33.* Nephi describes the loving nature of Christ and notes the Savior's invitation to all the world to partake of His goodness. In essence he asks, "How can you reject a God who is so full of mercy and goodness and turn His gospel into darkness?"

*Chapter 27.* Nephi teaches that because the Jews, the Gentiles, and Lehi's descendants are all in a state of apostasy, and because of the loving nature of Christ, another opportunity will be given to them to learn of the Savior and the saving principles of His gospel through a restoration. The key to that restoration will be the Book of Mormon. It will testify of the truths lost in the apostasy and provide a firm witness of Jesus Christ. The majority of this chapter comes from Isaiah 29.

*Chapter 28.* Nephi declares that Satan will not be idle. He will use any weapons at his disposal to negate the Restoration and keep the world in the darkness of apostasy. These weapons will come primarily from the philosophies, pride, learning, and lifestyles of mankind.

*Chapter 29.* Satan will make a specific attack on the Book of Mormon in an attempt to get people to reject it as well as the gospel of Christ and the Restoration. That attack is best stated by the phrase, "A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible" (2 Nephi 29:3).

*Chapter 30.* In spite of all opposition, the light of the Restoration will spread. The coming of the Jews, the Lamanites, and the Gentiles to the light of the gospel will cause a great "division" between the righteous and the wicked. In the end Christ will be victorious, and Satan will have power over men "no more, for a long time" (2 Nephi 30:18). Again, Isaiah is heavily quoted.



*Chapters 31–32.* Nephi teaches in simple terms what each individual must do to be part of the final victory of Christ. Each person must accept the Savior, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and then endure to the end by following the example of Christ, specifically His example of obedience to the Father.

*Chapter 33.* Nephi expresses his love for all three groups of people and pleads with them to believe in Christ. If they have faith in Christ, they will rejoice in Nephi's words and in the Book of Mormon.

With this overall perspective we can now examine the specifics of Nephi's message to the Gentiles.

## JESUS IS THE CHRIST

Nephi begins his message to the Gentiles by stating:

"It must needs be that the Gentiles be *convinced* also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God;

"And that he manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, working mighty miracles, signs, and wonders, among the children of men according to their faith" (2 Nephi 26:12–13; emphasis added).

This is the central message of the sermon. It is also the major purpose of the Book of Mormon. Moroni's statement of intent given in the title page proclaims that the Book of Mormon is written to convince "the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations." This so closely parallels Nephi's words that it cannot be coincidental. Nephi shows in chapter 27 that God will use the Book of Mormon in the latter days to bear witness of Christ's divinity to all nations, particularly the Gentile nations.

To be "convinced" that Jesus is the Christ indicates faith in Him, which is the first principle of the gospel. Nephi stated that Christ manifested Himself to "every nation" in various ways "according to their faith" (2 Nephi 26:13). What kind of faith is convincing faith, and how does it apply to the Gentiles?

In the *Lectures on Faith*, the Prophet Joseph Smith explains "that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent

being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. First, the idea that he [God] actually exists. Secondly, a *correct* idea of his character, perfections, and attributes. Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which [one] is pursuing is according to his [God's] will."<sup>1</sup> Convincing faith would, by definition, lead one to life and salvation.

## THE ETERNAL GOD

For the Gentiles to have convincing faith in Christ, they need to establish and maintain the above three principles clearly in their minds. Nephi, however, is not at all convinced that they have sufficient faith in Christ to lead them to salvation. This is ironic in light of the fact that the Gentile nations most frequently alluded to in the writings of Nephi are the Christian nations of Europe and the United States. In most places throughout Nephi's writings the terms *Gentile nations* and *Christian nations* are interchangeable (see 1 Nephi 13; 14; 22; see also 2 Nephi 30–33).

What then do the Christian or Gentile nations lack, since most of them already accept Christ in their own way? Nephi's own words supply the beginnings of an answer. They must be convinced not only of Christ's messiahship, but that He is (1) the Eternal God, (2) that He manifests Himself to all (every nation, kindred, tongue, and people) who believe in Him by the power of the Holy Ghost, and (3) that He manifests Himself by mighty miracles, signs, and wonders. We are left to ask if the Gentile Christians accept these basic truths about Christ.

What does Nephi mean by calling Christ the "Eternal God"? The Book of Mormon witnesses several profound and basic truths about Christ which have been largely lost by the Christian world. It teaches that Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Creator of the world. The brother of Jared saw and understood the divinity and premortal nature of Jesus Christ. For bearing testimony of Christ as God, Abinadi was burned at the stake. King Noah told him, "Thou art worthy of death. For thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men" (Mosiah 17:7–8). Abinadi taught the true doctrine of the Savior to the



wicked priests, explaining why Christ was called both the Father and the Son:

“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” (Mosiah 15:2–3).

Amulek taught the truth concerning Christ when challenged by the lawyer Zeezrom, who had tried to trick him through the doctrine of the Godhead:

“Now Zeezrom saith again unto him: Is the Son of God the very Eternal Father?

“And Amulek said unto him: Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Alma 11:38–39).

These pronouncements should not be confusing to those who have a correct understanding of the Godhead. It was not confusing to Amulek in spite of Zeezrom’s attempt at confusing him. Amulek later speaks of the judgment, when men shall “be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God” (Alma 11:44). The Book of Mormon does not teach that Christ and God the Father are the same being, as the creeds of Christendom do. This is plainly seen by the Savior’s own teachings in 3 Nephi, which stress the importance of Christ as a God in much the same way that John the Beloved does in John 1. This emphasis on the eternal nature of Christ’s divinity was plainly stated by Nephi, who testified: “For if there be no Christ there be no God; and if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation. But there is a God, and he is Christ, and he cometh in the fulness of his own time” (2 Nephi 11:7).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie pointedly and plainly testified of Christ. In his testimony we find a full meaning to Book of Mormon truths as they relate to Christian creeds and Nephi’s statement that the Gentiles must needs be convinced “that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God.”

"Christ-Messiah is God!

"Such is the plain and pure pronouncement of all the prophets of all the ages. In our desire to avoid the false and absurd conclusions contained in the creeds of Christendom, we are wont to shy away from this pure and unadorned verity; we go to great lengths to use language that shows there is both a Father and a Son, that they are separate Persons and are not somehow mystically intertwined as an essence of spirit that is everywhere present. Such an approach is perhaps essential in reasoning with the Gentiles of sectarianism; it helps to overthrow the fallacies formulated in their creeds.

"But having so done, if we are to envision our Lord's true status and glory, we must come back to the pronouncement of pronouncements, the doctrine of doctrines, the message of messages, which is that Christ is God. And if it were not so, he could not save us."<sup>2</sup>

We need to see Christ in his transfigured glory as the Eternal God, much as Peter, James, and John did on the Mount of Transfiguration. The timeliness and importance of the Book of Mormon in a world that more and more humanizes the Savior becomes blatantly apparent.

## TO ALL MEN THROUGH THE HOLY GHOST

Nephi also knew that the Gentiles needed to be convinced that Christ "manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (2 Nephi 26:13). It is not difficult to understand Nephi's concern in light of the Christian creeds. The Christian world largely rejects the Book of Mormon because it claims to be another witness for Christ. "A Bible! A Bible!" the world cries, "We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible" (2 Nephi 29:3). The Gentiles have no true doctrinal explanation for the vast majority of God's children throughout the world who have not heard the message of salvation through the atonement of Christ. At best the Christian churches consign them to a purgatorial state; at worst, to hell.

Nephi spoke of "the Holy Ghost." The Christian world today denies the gifts of the Spirit and the revelatory power of the Holy



Ghost. Moroni spoke of this denial after receiving the plates from his father:

“And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God, and say that they are done away, that there are no revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healing, nor speaking with tongues, and the interpretation of tongues;

“Behold I say unto you, he that denieth these things knoweth not the *gospel of Christ*; yea, he has not read the scriptures; if so, he does not understand them” (Mormon 9:7–8; emphasis added).

When asked by President Martin Van Buren “wherein we differed in our religion from the other religions of the day[,] Brother Joseph said we differed in mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. We considered that all other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>3</sup>

With the loss of the priesthood through the Christian apostasy, the gift of the Holy Ghost was also lost. Hence the Gentiles need to be convinced that Christ manifests Himself by the testifying power of the Holy Ghost and the confirming power of the gifts of the Spirit.

### MIGHTY MIRACLES, SIGNS, AND WONDERS

This leads to the third teaching to the Gentiles. They need to be convinced that Christ, the Eternal God, works “mighty miracles, signs, and wonders, among the children of men according to their faith” (2 Nephi 26:13). Christ-centered faith is the key to these miracles and wonders. For the most part the Christian world denies miracles, signs, and wonders, claiming they were done away after the first century A.D. Nephi saw this future denial and wrote, “And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men” (2 Nephi 28:5).

Moroni taught that the disappearance of “signs” indicates a loss of faith:

“And if there were miracles wrought then, why has God ceased to be a God of miracles and yet be an unchangeable Being? And behold, I



say unto you he changeth not; if so he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God, and is a God of miracles.

"And the reason why he ceaseth to do miracles among the children of men is because that *they dwindle in unbelief*, and depart from the right way, *and know not the God in whom they should trust*" (Mormon 9:19–20; emphasis added).

Signs, wonders, and miracles will accompany faith, hence Nephi's concern that the Gentiles be "convinced" that Jesus is the Christ and that He works "mighty miracles." The Lord's own words proclaim Him to be a God of miracles: "I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith" (2 Nephi 27:23).

### THE GENTILE STUMBLING BLOCK

After Nephi details the Gentile overthrow of "the seed of my brethren," he states that the Gentiles have "stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block" (2 Nephi 26:15, 20). An explanation of the Gentile stumbling block is given by the angel who instructs Nephi while he views the dream of his father. The angel says, "Because of these things [plain and precious truths] which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them" (1 Nephi 13:29). Some of those losses include an understanding of the Godhead, baptism, the Resurrection of Christ, revelation, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the sacrament, the priesthood, the Fall, and many other essential truths pertaining to the salvation of mankind. The angel also instructs Nephi that the "plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb . . . have been kept back by that abominable church" (1 Nephi 13:34). The Christian apostasy destroyed faith in Christ to the extent that the Gentiles need to be reconvinced of His divinity and gospel. Their stumbling block is the direct result of the Apostasy. Even though they are "Christian" nations, in Nephi's mind they do not have convincing faith in Christ. As Christ Himself stated to Joseph Smith, "They teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof" (JS–H 1:19). This idea



was spoken to Isaiah centuries before (see Isaiah 29:13) and recorded by Nephi in 2 Nephi 27:25. Both Isaiah and Nephi clearly understood the Gentile stumbling block.

The plain and precious truths removed by the Christian or Gentile apostasy dealt in part with Joseph Smith's three pillars of faith: the idea that God exists, a correct understanding of His attributes, and a knowledge of the course necessary to pursue in order to please Him. These truths were in large measure lost with the formation of the great and abominable church. Apostasy always strikes at the foundations of faith, seeking to replace revelation and testimony with emotional zeal, intellectual bargaining, and state religion. A brief summary of conditions in the Christian nations and churches of today will suffice to prove our point.

Nephi prophesied of the conditions the Gentile apostasy would bring. "They have built up many churches"; they are "lifted up in the pride of their eyes"; "they put down the power and miracles of God"; they seek "gain and grind upon the face of the poor" (2 Nephi 26:20). They "cause envyings, and strifes, and malice" (2 Nephi 26:21). "There are also secret combinations . . . and works of darkness" (2 Nephi 26:22). It is not difficult to verify Nephi's words in modern society. All these things are the results of apostasy and the loss of convincing faith. Speaking of the conditions that existed among the Christian, Gentile nations during World War I, Joseph F. Smith said, "Would it be possible, could it be possible, for this condition to exist if the people of the world possessed *really the true knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ?*"<sup>4</sup>

## THE PRECEPTS AND LEARNING OF MEN

Nephi gives a clear and repeated testimony as to the primary cause of human, particularly Gentile, apostasy. They "preach up unto themselves *their own wisdom and their own learning*" (2 Nephi 26:20; emphasis added). They are full of priestcrafts that stand in opposition to and replace the priesthood of God. Nephi defines them as follows: "Priestcrafts are that men preach and *set themselves up for a light* unto the world, that they may get gain and praise" (2 Nephi 26:29; emphasis added). Nephi then teaches that the apostate Christians of the Gentile



world proclaim that God "hath given *his power unto men*; . . . [therefore] hearken ye unto *my precept*" (2 Nephi 28:5; emphasis added). He warns that even the "humble followers of Christ . . . err because they are taught by the *precepts of men*" (2 Nephi 28:14; emphasis added). The words of the Savior to Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove concerning the teachings of the various Christian churches echo these ideas (see JS-H 1:19). The doctrines of men do not have the "power" to build convincing faith; therefore, they cannot bring salvation.

The learning, pride, and precepts of men standing in opposition to the revelations of God cause apostasy. There is an immense difference between inquiring after religion with "all the powers of both reason and sophistry" (JS-H 1:9) and humbly calling upon our Father in Heaven for light and truth as did Joseph. Men in a state of apostasy set *themselves* up for a light unto the world instead of holding up the Savior's light. "Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up," Christ taught the Nephites (3 Nephi 18:24).

The Book of Mormon bears multiple witnesses that this aspect of Gentile society is the principle cause of apostasy. In the allegory of the olive tree, Zenos explains apostasy with the following words:

"Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard?"

"And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Is it not the *loftiness* of thy vineyard—have not *the branches* thereof *overcome the roots* which are good? And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, *taking strength unto themselves*. Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted?" (Jacob 5:47–48; emphasis added).

Ironically, the *stumbling block* of the Gentiles is their own learning. This learning replaces the plain and precious truths, causing them to stumble.

## THE ATTRIBUTES OF CHRIST

To offset the "doctrine of Christ" taught by the precepts of men, Nephi gives a beautiful description of the Savior. A correct understanding of His "perfections" will do much to "convince" the Gentiles

that Jesus is the Christ and that they must build a saving faith. Christ describes the Gentiles in the following words: “The Gentiles . . . shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth” (3 Nephi 16:10). In opposition to the pride of the Gentile world, Nephi, echoing the words of Isaiah, describes the humble invitation of Christ.

“He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him. Wherefore, he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation.

“Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price.

“Behold, hath he commanded any that they should depart out of the synagogues, or out of the houses of worship? Behold, I say unto you, Nay.

“Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and he hath commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance.

“Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” (2 Nephi 26:24–28).

With this true picture of Christ, convincing faith can be renewed. It is also Nephi’s invitation to the Gentiles to return to the simple purity of Christ’s doctrines and love. An attitude of condemnation, exclusion, superiority, or exploitation is antithetical to the true Christian spirit. The Christian Gentile world has largely forgotten Christ’s teaching, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

## DRUNKEN IN INIQUITY

Nephi begins chapter 27 with a general statement of the iniquity that will exist “in the last days, or in the days of the Gentiles, . . . all



the lands of the earth . . . will be drunken with iniquity and all manner of abominations" (2 Nephi 27:1). According to the Revelation of John, "The inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her [the great and abominable church's] fornication" (Revelation 17:2). It is apparent that this iniquity results in large measure from the Apostasy. This is plainly taught to Nephi during his vision as recorded in 1 Nephi 14 and by the Prophet Joseph Smith, who records that "grief, sorrow, and care . . . [brought on by] murder, tyranny, and oppression [are] supported and urged on and upheld by the influence of that spirit which hath so strongly riveted the creeds of the fathers, who have inherited lies, upon the hearts of the children, and filled the world with confusion." The Prophet also warns that the confusion and oppression of apostasy are "growing stronger" and are "the very main-spring of all corruption, and the whole earth groans under the weight of its iniquity" (D&C 123:7). Then, in language reminiscent of the angel's words in 1 Nephi 13:5, describing "the formation of a [great] church" of apostasy, Joseph Smith concludes, "It is an iron yoke, it is a strong band; they are the very handcuffs, and chains, and shackles, and fetters of hell" (D&C 123:8).

#### "THE FULNESS OF THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL"

Nephi sees, however, that in spite of a world drunken in iniquity, the love of God will be manifested. The Gentiles and all the world will be given the knowledge necessary to have convincing faith in Christ. In essence the world is given another opportunity to accept the gospel in its fulness. A restoration is promised. That restoration hinges on a book that contains "the fulness of the everlasting Gospel" (JS-H 1:34). Its pages restore the true knowledge of God—His attributes, characteristics, perfections—and teach men the course they must walk in order to know their lives are in accordance with His will. True convincing and saving faith in Christ is the book's purpose and its central theme. For this purpose the Book of Mormon will always be the main pillar upon which the Latter-day Saints build their testimonies of Christ.

In chapter 27, Nephi describes the Book of Mormon in detail:



“The Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered” (2 Nephi 27:6). He explains in words of plainness the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He mentions the “three witnesses” and “a few” others (2 Nephi 27:12–13), which we identify as the eight witnesses. He gives special instructions to the Prophet Joseph Smith regarding the final sealing up of the book again that the Lord “may preserve [its] words” (2 Nephi 27:22).

### THE LEARNED AND THE UNLEARNED

By far the major thrust of chapter 27 deals with the conflict between the “learned” and the “unlearned,” between the blind and those who see. This is a continuation of the same theme described by Nephi in chapter 26. Nephi records that the book is “sealed.” There are several interpretations that can be gleaned from this word. Certainly in a historical or literal context, the plates were sealed and Joseph Smith, Martin Harris, and Professor Charles Anthon fulfilled the prophetic dialogue between the learned and the unlearned. Parts of the Book of Mormon plates were also literally sealed and translation was not given.

Taken in a larger symbolic context, the learned represent the “world and the wisdom thereof” (1 Nephi 11:35). To the learned, proud, worldly-wise Gentile society, the depth, spirit, truth, and edifying power of the Book of Mormon are “sealed.” The book will always be sealed to the proud. “I cannot read it,” the learned declare (2 Nephi 27:18). Those words have been proven true by generations of critics who claim to see the gnat-like flaws in the Book of Mormon and cannot see the camel-like truths when they are written “as plain as word can be” (2 Nephi 32:7). The Book of Mormon remains “sealed” to the stiffnecked, “for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness” (2 Nephi 32:7). Nephi testifies that these learned people “cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught” (2 Nephi 33:2). “Behold, ye have closed your eyes,” he warns (2 Nephi 27:5). Because of this self-inflicted blindness, many of the Gentiles continue to



"stumble," rejecting the Book of Mormon and thus failing to see the truths necessary to obtain "convincing" faith in Christ unto salvation.

Nephi speaks of the overt opposition that the learned will mount against the Book of Mormon and warns that "all that watch for iniquity are cut off; and they that *make a man an offender for a word*, and lay a snare for him . . . and *turn aside the just for a thing of naught*" (2 Nephi 27:31–32; emphasis added). The Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith have suffered this type of attack since 1830. How many critics have tried to "disprove" the Book of Mormon because of a single word or phrase? How many have searched it meticulously for flaws and contradictions? How many have rejected its goodness, judging it to be worth nothing?

In spite of the attacks, however, the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith will continue to be accepted by the meek and unlearned. Humble searchers for truth will learn greater truths than the worldly wise. They will "read a sealed book."

A great restoration of truth accompanies the Book of Mormon, even "a marvelous work and a wonder" (2 Nephi 27:26). Nephi teaches that the truths which proceed from the unlearned will cause "the wisdom of their wise and learned [to] perish" (2 Nephi 27:26). Those who "fight against Zion and . . . distress her" are compared to "a hungry man which dreameth, and behold he eateth but he awaketh and his soul is empty" (2 Nephi 27:3). As Elder McConkie so graphically stated, "What does it matter if a few barking dogs snap at the heels of the weary travelers? Or that predators claim those few who fall by the way? The caravan moves on."<sup>5</sup>

To the unlearned and humble who are maimed (made spiritually "deaf" and "blind") by the apostasy, Nephi gives a message of hope: "In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. . . . They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine" (2 Nephi 27:29, 35). The stumbling block of apostasy is removed for the Gentiles who are given eyes to see and ears to hear by the Book of Mormon. It restores true sight, and with that

vision, convincing faith in Christ is once again on the earth and men are prepared for salvation.

### THE FINAL VICTORY

Nephi presents a more detailed picture of Satan's opposition in 2 Nephi 28 and 29. Chapter 29, especially, speaks of a direct attack against the Book of Mormon as a second witness of Christ. The "learned" Gentiles say to God, "Enough! We have your words and will not accept any more" (see 2 Nephi 29:3).

So that all men will know the final outcome of the conflict between Satan and Christ, between the learned and the unlearned, between apostasy and restoration, Nephi wrote chapter 30. In it he announces that members of the Jews, the Lamanites, and the Gentiles (the three major groups spoken of throughout his farewell), will accept the Book of Mormon, come to Christ, lose their "scales of darkness," and be convinced (2 Nephi 30:6). Nephi clearly states that the Book of Mormon will be the key to this conversion: "And now, I would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after the book of which I have spoken shall come forth, and be written unto the Gentiles, and sealed up again unto the Lord, there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written" (2 Nephi 30:3). The success of the restoration begins with the Gentiles, who carry the Book of Mormon to Lehi's descendants and the Jews, that they might "be restored unto . . . the knowledge of Jesus Christ" (2 Nephi 30:5). The last are first and the first last.

The Restoration results in "a great division" (2 Nephi 30:10), and leads to a final separation at the Millennium when the wicked are destroyed, and, as Nephi teaches, "Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more, for a long time" (2 Nephi 30:18).

Although chapters 31 through 33 are discussed in other papers, it is good to mention one thing about the last three chapters in the context of the message to the Gentiles. Those chapters contain "the doctrine of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:21). As if to validate his own words and restore a plain and precious truth, Nephi gives a pure and simple explanation of



the truths of the plan of salvation and the atonement of Christ. He shows his Gentile readers "the way" to be "saved in the kingdom of God" (2 Nephi 31:21). Since Christ is "the way," it is not surprising to find Nephi exhorting all mankind to "endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God" (2 Nephi 31:16). Only in this way can the Gentiles be "convinced" that Jesus is the Christ and find salvation through His name.

### THE FINAL TESTIMONY

The Book of Mormon must always be at the center of our attempt to convince the Gentiles, Lamanites, or Jews of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the truths of His gospel. To try any other way is bound to end in frustration. Nephi concludes his words with a very powerful testimony of the Book of Mormon and Christ. That testimony links them together with an inseparable unity. "And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good" (2 Nephi 33:10).

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### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 38.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 98.
3. Joseph Smith, *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 4:42.
4. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949), 416; emphasis added.
5. Bruce R. McConkie, "The Caravan Moves On," *Ensign*, November 1984, 85; emphasis added.